

MARSH: Slipperman's Recording Distorted Guitars Thread From Hell

(If you want to skip this introduction and cut to the content, [click here.](#))

It's the kind of thing you find on the net and think that the person who created it must have snapped. It's too good, too useful, and they're giving all of this away *for free*. So being the cheap bastard that I am, I saved all of it on a local disc in case Slipperman ever came to his senses and started charging money for it.

While it all started as an internet discussion of how to record and mix distorted guitars it evolved into one of the best online resources that I have ever found regarding the process, methods and sheer terror which is recording heavy guitar-oriented music.

It's said that those who can't do, teach ... so when you find someone like Slipperman who can do *and* teach -- pay attention, because it's a rare gift.

Much of the technical information can be found in other places, but the tangential nature of these lessons combined with heaps of tips gleaned from hard work experience makes this an invaluable resource.

The main thread itself is still a part of the M.A.R.S.H. (a highly recommended resource) and the recently reposted files can be found [here](#).

On this page you will find the accompanying images and the mp3s (which eventually replaced text altogether). As far as I know this is a complete collection of all the material.

Of course inevitably this stuff was too good to last, and somehow someone on the technical side of the forums at the MARSH lost all of this stuff. It's been reposted, and will hopefully continue to be reposted should it vanish again, but just in case it goes down, this page will act as a mirror.

Highly entertaining and, extremely informative, you would do well to heed every word in this entire thing. Even the Profanity.

Forget that last bit.

...Especially the profanity.

(If you've been over to the M.A.R.S.H., then you've probably already read the text and might want to just [skip to the sound files](#))

The "Table of Contents":

There's a lot of information to digest in this, and the best way to read it is probably to start at the beginning and go from there, but should you be looking for something more specific, or if you've already read this stuff and you're trying to find a specific section, here's a brief list of links to some of the subjects covered...

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The Thread Itself:

I'm working tonight. Right now, I'm playing 2 seconds of hooky. This is a \$10 million question in my trade. In some ways, on some days, this question is a big part of WHY I'm working. I will log on later tonight if I can keep my head up and hit some of this with you. I could write AT LEAST 1 book on this. How good a book it would be...???!!??

is another story. HOHO-fucking-HO.

OK.

Jesus, what a fucking death march this is gonna be...

For starters, at the root of this question is the concept of frequency dependent dynamic swing vs. (perceived)'steady state' volume. The way this impacts your job as an audio engineer is a massive, shitty can of worms, not only on input, but during the course of the remaining tracking and (Who woulda thunk?) downstream in mix as well.

You gotta start in the room with 'the sound'. First, Put in some fucking earplugs, so when you go to get sounds on the desk later you'll actually have an opinion on ANYTHING. Then, get 'Einstein' to fiddle with his miserable square wave rectifier/noise generator until he confirms it is indeed producing "his sound". The incredibly new and amazing sound you haven't heard from anybody else.... in the last 15 minutes. This is MAJOR, once attained; we now have a starting point. We can now feel free to embark on our hellish voyage into the most fruitless and subjective undertaking ever conceived in the history of man's sad efforts on this sad and forgotten pebble in space. "A great guitar sound". Something NOBODY has agreed upon for more than 15 minutes since Ike left the White House.

If you can't get by this first hurdle IN THE ROOM. You are in deep shit.... I can't help you. God can't help you. YOU ARE FUCKED. FUCKED. KILL YOURSELF. It is imperative that the zorch-fucko-twerf playing guitar is hearing 'his sound' in the room. IT CANNOT BE OVERSTATED.

Now, the crux of the specific question raised in this thread rears it's repugnant visage. In the original post 'buffer' indicates...(and I take the liberty of paraphrasing here) "Crazy LF shit is flying around like mad and you KNOW it's gonna get nutty when you whip a mic in front of that speaker enclosure". You may ALSO be hearing some nasty, vibrating, rattling, farting, buzzing noises emanating from the enclosure that bugs, or (more commonly - and much more horrifyingly) doesn't bug the brain surgeon wielding that cleverly disguised canoe paddle. EVERYTHING can be a potential contributor to the problem(s). You gotta find out WHICH things are killing YOU from a seemingly endless list. Don't look to 'twinkie'. He cannot be trusted. He is a MUSICIAN. THE ENEMY. An irritating blip on the FOF indicator that must and will be eradicated for the sake of all that is noble and the preservation of man's glorious march into the future. He is hell bent on forcing you to make SHITTY SOUNDING RECORDS AND YOU MUST STOP HIM. But, I digress.

Pull the cab into a space where you can clearly HEAR the offending piece of shit WITHOUT a whole lotta distractions i.e. nearby walls, rattling drums or stands, road cases etc. With 'Mozart' still pounding a riff that alternates regularly between the 'chuggs' and some chords, on his pitiful

penis extension, run a few tests. Whip the master gain on the head up and down a little and see at what points the following things start to happen.

The speakers in the cab start to 'excuse'. Ya know like an 'excursion'? i.e. at what point do the speakers start to REALLY move in the cabinet? Look at the fucking things up close. Put your ear-plugged head right up next to them and eyeball the speakers. Get a fucking flashlight and peer thru the grille. Not working out for ya? Can't see shit? Cut the fucking grille away with an exacto knife. No, I'm not kidding. Have the fucking label pay for a new fucking grille. I don't care; you want a great guitar sound or fucking not? Have some other bozo twist the knob while 'meathead' is twanking.... Seeing it now? Good! OK, make a mental note of the gain setting at the point of 'baseline excursion'.

Have your cretinous minion twist der knob around more(zorch-fuck is STILL endlessly playing pitiful chugs to chord riff) to find out thingy numero deuce. The point of 'Cabinet Involvement'. That's right. Like 'Bill and Monika' if you heat things up enough with those two suckers in close proximity, eventually one is gonna start shaking, banging, and blowing the other around. By observing the cab at different volumes you will find a point at which the enclosure starts to get "involved" in the 'chuggs'. Just shut-up and do it. It is NOT always the point at which the speakers 'excuse'. Sometimes it is BEFORE(in master gain volume) the speakers 'bark', sometimes it is AFTER. This is gonna provide you with some GINORMO clues as to what's going on with how you're going to get 'freaknicks' sound to tape.

Recording distorted guitars.

It's a bizarre undertaking, and one that has consumed an appreciable portion of my adult life. I've always thought making heavy records was one of the most difficult and underestimated tasks in AE. For a bunch of reasons I may cover in these posts.

OK. We figured out in part 1 that there are a couple of critical points we've gotta have a handle on when getting ready to mic our expectant 'GuitarGod'. One was the point at which the speakers really got 'moving', and the other was the point at which the cabinet started to get 'involved' in the low end. Lemme start by explaining WHY these are important. The 'excursion' point of the speakers is a 'critical mass' juncture at which the timbre of the sound ANY speaker that a common 'rock style' enclosure is presenting starts to change in a pretty dramatic way. HOW it changes is the rub..... NO FREE FUCKING LUNCH. Learning the various 'curves' and characteristics of each amp and speaker/enclosure type is one little part of the reason this shit takes YEARS to master. Different combinations produce dramatically differing results. Even more baffling is the ENORMOUS amount of other variables thrown into the fray. Little goodies like (Mind you, this is JUST from the ACTUAL speaker end-the cabs are another story we'll get to soon!) the type and size, electrical and sonic properties(cute stuff like ohms, wiring schemes and wire gauges, wattage, freq. response, efficiency... the list is ginormo-dome) and total age of/wear on, the speaker. Just to name a few. Whew! Sure you don't wanna do boy bands?

OK. Here are some useful LOOSE guidelines when you look at 'excursion point'. MOST. I repeat, MOST speakers start to 'flatten and fatten' at this point. Almost like tape compression(boy are we gonna be getting to that IN THIS THREAD soon, you didn't think I was gonna stop at micing did ya?). There is a 'zone' you can get into with MOST speakers that makes A HUGE DIFFERENCE to what the mic hears UP CLOSE. It's the point at which the actual mechanical activity of the cone flipping back and forth in the speakers 'tether' starts to

generate it's OWN, DISTINCT, very audible, 'sonic additions'. The TOTALLY SUBJECTIVE, and VERY HOTLY CONTESTED, opinions that 'twinkies' have about various speaker brands and types(on distorted guitar rigs) HINGE, for the most part on how speakers get TO the 'money zone' and what they 'DO' when they get there. I have seen bitter and brutal FISTFIGHTS over hapless roadies or techies accidentally replacing 'Gold back ROLA's' with 'green back vinties'. 'white backs' vs. 'black backs'. And this example in just the 'Celestion' brand family ALONE. Between all the brands and types.... IT GETS FUCKING CRAZY.

GUYS GET CRAZY. And at the end of the day. They have every right to. Yep, as much as I bust balls on musicians in my posts, the better ones REALLY CAN 'feel' the differences in these little details, and often 'get naked' and REALLY bummed out if you alter the 'window' they talk to/with the instrument through. I may be a jaded, miserable, bitter, old AE prick, but I GET IT. Anyhoo. As you go thru yer career micing up these various rigs, you will start to develop a series of judgments, observations and assessments as to your expectations from, and approaches to... micing this horrific host of (un)holy horrors. For example. If a kid comes in with a Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier head and a Marshall JCM800/1960 slant. I'm gonna be asking some questions. Yo dude. What's in the 1960? Yer cab? Whites?(Yuk.) OK. They're not the originals, right? OH, ya blew the golds... OK. Lotta miles on em'?(never believe the answer to this question) Cool. Alright. Let's get ya hooked up. See what we got.... I FUCKING STAND THERE, DUDE.

"Is that a speaker cable going into the cab?(Duh! wish I had a NICKEL!). NO. Yer not using that 50 ft. stage wire. Use THIS.(15ft monster cable). Hohhhh. What's with the stomp box adaptors....? Here's some 9v. batteries for our purposes today. Batteries are cleaner, less noisy power than most cheap AC adaptors. OK dude. Let's make yer sound happen right here! That's about it, right? Yer in the zone? Cool. OK man, here's what we're gonna do. You guys 'chug' a lot, huh? Cool. Give me a riff that alternates between the chug and some chords. Yeah. That's it! Cool. Keep playing that! Perfect. Just play that like a madman while I do some shit with 'freaknick'(point at asst. eng.)."

Let's review. We check the stupid stuff.

Instrument prep(lightly touched on in thread). Somebody ELSE please hit practical wisdoms re: pickup placement and selection/maintenance, neck and fret board issues, intonation and tuning issues based upon the ASSUMPTION that what the kid is WEARING is what he's gonna be PLAYING. Any other approach will turn into an endless discussion of the relative merits of the various instruments, interminable and wholly subjective.

Amplifier prep(not covered in thread). Same banana as above. Tube conditions and anomalies(microphonics, age, 'matching' and other electrical characteristic scenarios etc.) No 'best amp' shit. Doom.

Cabinet prep(pretty well covered in thread already).

Let's work under the following far fetched assumptions or I'm NEVER gonna get done here.

- 1.) All this shit is spec. and the player has 'his sound' emanating from the cabinet.
- 2.) You've sussed out the major 'master volume issues'. In short: You KNOW at what Master Volume setting the speakers start to 'excuse' and where the 'cabinet involvement' starts.
This is the point at which we start to separate the boys from the men. Spend just a few more moments with somebody twisting the Master Volume up and down slowly and do a

couple of things (and this is gonna suck) take the plugs out for just a minute and at the point of 'excursion' FIND THE BEST SPEAKER. Eek. My LEAST favorite part of ALL dirt guitar recording. I'm not even gonna tell you what to do.... Nobody should have to do it. Just do it. Stick yer fucking coconut in there. Hail Mithra. All of 'em sound the same to ya? Fine. Pick yer poison. On slant cabs there is almost 0% chance you're not gonna have a preference. On straights there's still very little chance that (once you know what yer looking for) you're not gonna have a preference. So the million dollar question.

What are you looking for as yer destroying your hearing?

Forget about the 'cab thrum' stuff for a minute and just concentrate on the following. Which of the 4 speakers (yes, I'm ASSUMING 4x12) has the clearest and most powerful impact at the 'excursion point'. Hurry! Your ears will NOT last for more than about 3 minutes of this abuse, and once you kill them you're outta the loop for 24hrs. I try to spend about 1 minute MAX on this little fiasco. Even better yet, train an assistant you trust (is that possible?) to take the beating for you - Hey! Fuck you... 'old guys' did that shit to ME for fucking years. Anyways, find the BEST speaker. More you do it. Better you'll get at it. Some basic tips. The 'softer' speakers will start to choke and sound tubby as you pass the 'exc-pnt'. Others may be too 'stiff' and require driving the whole bunch too hard to get them really moving. Get "Hendrix Jr." to play some suspended chords (you may have to show him some), and see what happens to the note clarity in this critical juncture. Are the low-mids a murky mass at ANY volume? Or just when the speakers hit our 'EP'?

OK. Let's ASSUME you find a 'sweet' speaker for 'close range micing'. Cool. You ain't done sonny. Now get the Master Volume on the head back to the 'enclosure involvement' point. Ya know. The cabinets just STARTING to 'thrum'. Have the fool holding the oversized cricket bat with tuning pegs keep playing just 'palm mutes'. Step back from the enclosure and see WHERE in the room, as far as distance, the sound of the cabinet starts to 'bloom'. That's right. Walking (I actually sit in a rolling office chair for some reasons I'll get into later... yeah, yeah, I know, "Cause I'm A FAT LAZY ASSHOLE" HOHO) STRAIGHT back from the enclosure, find THE FIRST (closest to cab) spot the low end starts to 'swell'. It might be 3 or 4 feet... it might be 6 or 8 or even 15 feet. Find it. Have your assistant run and cut a piece of twine to mark the 'approximate' distance. Move the cabinet to the area where you will actually be micing it up. Do you have enough room for your 'twine run'? No? Not the end of the world. We'll get back to that. Get the head and player into the control room and makes sure the new cable run has not changed our 'critical' Master Volume points. Depending on your situation it's VERY possible it will have. Some shops have hard-wired speaker 'wall-runs' and on occasion these can be VERY lossy indeed. Find out what's up and make the necessary adjustments to the head.

Let's ASSUME. For brevity's sake, we are going to use a single Shure SM57 on the cabinet. If we get into other scenarios right now, we're gonna be here forever, fine. Take your 57 and place it dead in the middle of your 'sweet' speakers cone touching the grille, or where the grille used to be. Now pull it straight back out about 2-3 inches and turn it so the diaphragm is pointing 'flat' at the ANGLE of the speaker cone. So about 30-35 degrees to one side or the other. Don't go crazy. This is a STARTING point and may not mean shit in the long game. Get your ass in the control room, the games are about to begin.

At the end of our last installment we had positioned a cabinet in an isolated space. The subhuman twerp beating on the hapless and offensive instrument had confirmed for us that his 'tone of God' was indeed emanating from the cabinet. We had checked and fixed all the

obvious bullshit bug-a-boo's in the amp, cabinet and instrument. We knew the master volume position for 'excursion' and 'involvement'. We had determined the distance for low-end 'wave fruition' and had made our mentally challenged assistant cut a piece of twine to measure and mark it. We had identified the 'sweet' speaker, hung a solitary 57 in front of it, and were headed back to the relative safety of the control room.

Whew. Should have taken about 20 mins. to accomplish these tasks all told. Took about 6 hrs. to describe via post in my admittedly tangential and laborious fashion.

I assume that we will be recording our guitars to a 2" 24 track analog deck today because, by and large, 'digital guitars' suck giant moose peenie with a huge throbbing purple vein on it (for reasons I will cover in depth soon) and anybody who doesn't know/admit that needs more help than I could ever provide for them. I would also like to point out that we will be employing a HIGH quality pre-amp and a truly bad-ass outboard or desk EQ AND (possibly) a money compression device or 2, or we are going to get 'good'. And we don't want fucking 'good'. We want fucking 'great'. If you think a great guitar sound is cheap. You are fucked in the head. Period. Some will protest this seemingly apparent 'elitist attitude'. Fuck 'em. They will be beaten briefly. Then killed. Later, their corpses will be exhumed for copious spitting and further beatings.

OK. Let's say. Neve 1073 to GML 8200 to EL-8 Distressor to Studer A800MkIII. Whatever. Quality. Could be a bunch of other shit that ALSO sounds great. I ain't going there without a production agreement and generous per diems. Get a headphone feed into the iso space containing the cabinet. Bring freak-boy twanker and his amp head into control room with you. Send poor sap of an assistant with a pair of CLOSED EARPHONES into the howling vortex of deafening white noise that is the iso booth. Hell awaits. FIRST. Let's figure out our 'steady state' requirements. If you go back to my second post in this thread, you'll see that I stated that the majority of the battle we had to fight here was "steady state tone vs. frequency dependent amplitude swing" issues. Remember. We're recording HEAVY GUITARS WITH f1i BIG LEGS f0i0 .

OK. WITHOUT MOVING ANYTHING, let's dial up a basic gain structure from the 1073 into the A800. No EQ yet. Just gain. Turn around and LOOK at the meters on the 800 you lazy sack of shit. Depending on the desk, you might have NO fucking idea what the 'real deal' reading on the 'swing' is from the desk. A lot of LED and Plasma style meters are too hard to read in these cases. On the other hand, some desk metering is AMAZING and will KILL the machine on what you can SEE about how yer banging tape.

Time to make the assistant wish he was dead. Tell him his job is to loosen the various fixtures on the boom stand holding the SM57 enough to allow him free and unfettered range of motion to 'sweep the speaker' with the mic. THAT IS..... He is to SLOWLY sweep the head of the mic around the cone in a continuous fashion until you hear something you're LOVING for 'steady state tone'.

Get 'Twinkie' to play some VERY REPETITIVE chord stuff that omits the 'chugging' for a couple of minutes. Tell him that when you need him to stop playing, he must stop playing IMMEDIATELY or you will fucking KILL him. Pet the handgun every sane engineer keeps on top of the console lovingly, like a favorite cat, as you say this. Look purposefully and coldly THRU him and say these EXACT WORDS.

"IF YOU DON'T STOP PLAYING EXACTLY WHEN I SAY STOP... I'M GOING TO SHOOT AND SHOOT AND CONTINUE TO SHOOT YOU UNTIL I RUN OUT OF AMMUNITION..... THEN I'M GOING TO RESUME SHOOTING YOU AFTER 'ASS-BOY'(point at shivering assistant) GETS BACK FROM THE GUN SHOP WITH MY REPLACEMENT AMMO". Anything short of this type of explanation/arrangement will usually NOT provide the necessary results. This person is a guitar player. They have the intellectual capacity of freshly mown grass. Do not ALLOW them to think. That will doom the record. Cause band to switch to 'rap metal'. Compel them to start whispering in a really corny tortured voice about their miserable childhood growing up in a trailer park in Florida. Bring about pestilence. Locust. Scorched Earth. Mass destruction.

OK.

Time to get twisted into form.

Tell 'ass-boy' the INSTANT he hears the guitar stop playing OR he hears YOU TELL HIM TO STOP. He is to stop 'sweeping the speaker' with the SM57. Get busy. TAKE YER TIME. Drive 'ass-boy' and 'Twinkie' nuts. DON'T fucking rush! Feel free to make them sweep and play/stop. Sweep and play/stop until the fucking cows come home. Fuck them. You have to learn the 'range of tone' possible with this sound/mic/pre. FEEL NO GUILT. LANGUISH. GET A SLURPIE. ANSWER PHONE CALLS AND EMAILS. NO HURRY. WATCH 'EXTREME DATING'. NO FUCKING HURRY. FORCE GUITARIST TO PLAY THE SAME FUCKING RIFF OVER AND OVER. AIM GUN AT HIM IF HE TRIES TO CHANGE THE RIFF OR HURRY YOU IN ANY WAY.

Why? Because he is the prick who will blame you forever if you don't capture his feeble noise emanations properly. Make no mistake. And you need the repetition to assist you in determining the differences in the various mic positions. After a bit you will hear a trend in the sweeps... Ask 'ass-boy' questions.... Where is it now? Right edge of cone? Cool. More. Where is it now? Dead center pointing slightly to the left? Fine. You will start to see trends in the placements effect on the sound. I'm not going to explain it feck.... It's your fucking journey. Get on it. I will offer this little tip. A lot of young engineers will gravitate towards the BRIGHTEST placement. NOT necessarily the best idea. 'Fizz' above 6k is rarely useful in the 'steady state' part of heavy guitar tones. If you avoid capturing a signal too skewed in this direction you will be able do less low pass 'trapping' later. I'll explain that shit later too. OK. Sooner or later you will get under the impression you know where the mic is going to work best for your 'steady state' tone. Get 'ass-boy' to lock it down. Check his 'locked down' positioning before you command him to return to base. Got summore bad newz. We're just getting going. By the way. Once you train a good assistant to do this shit with you, you can rip out BADASS mic placements in A LOT less time than it took to write this mess. Probably about as much time as it took to read it.

On 18 Jan 2003 13:25 fletcher wrote: Quote: The sound comes from the player, not the equipment. You can get a wonderfully heavy guitar tone with a Telecaster and a Twin Reverb... it's all in how you approach it, and how the player handles it.

Not at the gain structures my clients use. HOHOHO.

I'm going to give Fletcher a stock Tele, a stock Twin, and 8 million years to get the "Carcass" guitar tone. He may get something he or others believe is 'good', 'heavy', or 'whatever'. But you ain't gonna get that guitar and amp combination to give you the level of distortion, saturation and flat out square wave rectification activity yer gonna get from a Les Paul Standard with EMG's into a Mesa triple rectifier.

God ain't gonna do that...

Hence the first "requirement" in my previously posted portions of this thread. 'MAKE SURE THE PLAYER AGREES THAT HIS SOUND IS COMING OUT OF THE AMP.'

The "hang a 57 and run" bunch are dead fucking wrong about this one... In my neck of the woods, various shades and flavors of the above attitude are for quitters and minor leaguers as far as tracking and mixing distorted electric guitar. ESPECIALLY super-saturated 'nu-metal' type of sounds. Which are a SERIOUS pain in the ass. It's a cop out.

Like everything else you encounter in AE, this stuff is about YEARS of observation, assimilation and refinement. Period. There is a list of about 25 guys I can think of off the top of my head who are masters of the 'heavy guitar' game. They didn't get there by accident. You don't have to like or agree with the decisions they make on their records, but have a little respect. And common sense. THIS SHIT TAKES WORK. In heavy music AE there is a REAL tradition... A passing of the torch. It dates all the way back to the roots of the music. AE's are a GIGANTIC part of how/why this happens. I've lived to witness it. More than once. Flippant disclaimers of the wisdom of scope and scale of these undertakings can be heard echoing in the empty side aisles at AES. I, for one, would like (Who knows?.. maybe NEED) to believe some of us know better and have not expended formidable portions of our lives creating and refining these traditions in vain.

OK. More 'things that go bump in the night' shit here....

We have moved thru the dreaded 'sweep and suffer' phase of mic placement and are going to discuss some particulars of "what is what" in our capture and subjugate process.

First: Lets look over some critical 'dirt guitar' EQ ranges and how they affect the myriad of choices/possibilities we might wish to examine in our undertaking. Bottom to top.

20-45Hz.	Never say never. Just say rarely.
50-90hz	Ahh the madness. Here's the 'swing' range in our 'chugging'.
100-150	Bottom of the meat.
180-240	Lo-Center of the meat.
250-320	Hi-Center of the meat.
340-650	Danger Will Robinson. Top of meat/Bottom of mids. CRITICAL.
700-900	More danger. Hard to hear. Kills 'newbies' on contact. Will explain.
950-1.2k	Pure Satan. Make or break ya. Easy to hear. Hard to control.
1.3k-1.6k	Ditto the above.
1.7k-2.2k	Top of the mids/Bottom of pick attack range. Oh, the fear.
2.3k-3.1k	Middle of pick range. Picky de poison. Mucho Satania.
3.2k-4.2k	Top of pick range. Pick out a nice coffin. Yer gonna need it.
4.3k-6.5k	Bottom of fizz. Add Beefeaters for gin fizz. Guzzle many glasses.
6.6k-8k.	Top of fizzy. Many will kill this range ruthlessly. Careful. Can O' wormies.
8k-10k	Road to hell. Paved with good intentions. Enjoy. Not.
10-15k	Less obvious road(s) to hell. Gravel. Lose a windshield up here.
15k-25k	Same disclaimer as 25-40Hz. Can you say 'sometimes bandwidth matters'?

WhaddaWeGot? 17 ways(freq. ranges) to kill yourself?

OK. DISCLAIMER TIME FOR "OLD GUYS". I'm describing the Grand Canyon. We both know it. Can't REALLY be done.

Gimmie some rope and I'll hang myself impressively. Stop laughing, you pricks. By the way fellas, we're STILL tracking. It's gonna get WORSE in mix.

Let's just talk about EQ APPROACHES.

Schools of thought.

School 1: Capture it ALL.

School 2: Capture it ALL but capture LESS of what yer pretty sure yer not going to use much of later.

School 3: Capture MOSTLY what you want with a TINY nod to the wacky shit.

School 4: Fuck everyone. Capture ONLY what you like. HAMMER the fuck out of everything else.

School 5: Shit pants in terror. Return to recording rap with SP1200.

OK. So there's REALLY only 4 schools.....

Each one has its advantages and drawbacks.

I was trained by a guy who vacillated between schools 1 and 2. For more than a decade I would only trim away that which I truly knew I was NEVER gonna use... if even that. The philosophy was... If you gotta EQ, something is wrong. Wrong mic, wrong pre, wrong placement, wrong guitar, wrong amp, wrong player (so kill me), wrong SOMETHING. Go change it.... If you've got the time and budget, School #1 can potentially be the way to go. The wisdoms seem glaringly apparent. You build your basic sound to tape with the shortest and cleanest signal path. One that gives you the least 'phase smear', the best bandwidth and noise floor (I don't think THAT'S gonna be a "huge one" on these types of sounds but...) etc. Later, in mix, with the 'big picture' in hand you can 'size' the tones up and down as needed without digging yourself into a corner beforehand.

However.... This approach DOES NOT optimize the most effective use of some of the best tools at your disposal. Tape compression/saturation work MUCH more effectively on very focused tones rather than 'everybody's welcome' ones. Think about it... If yer jamming a shitload of signal to tape and that signal contains a lot of 'schmoltz'... yer gonna end up getting a lot less 'steadystate' type level than if you trim away EVERYTHING you don't want. That tape compression you're NOT optimizing is the coolest, cleanest and yes, WARMEST, type of 'lossless' compression you will EVER get. EVER. If you learn to shape that shit around and find out what your tape deck will, and will not, do before crapping out.... You can do some fucking DAMAGE. Also, your pre's inputs can accommodate seriously elevated levels of gain without the constraints of 'full bandwidth operation'. The difference this can make in getting dirt guitars 'in yer face' can be colossal. Many of the better mic pre/eqs will take a substantially greater amount of gain before distortion at the front of the circuit if you rip them properly. More on this in a minute.

So now we're in the realm of Schools 1-3. Which are kinda like Judaism. You got the 'reformists', the 'conservatives' and the 'orthodox'. They're all Jews. They all worship the same deity. They all follow the same basic spiritual precepts and espouse similar beliefs.

But some are pretty mellow about it...

some are kinda strict about a lotta shit.....

And some are FUCKING crazy mothers on a major religious mission.

If my audio work was Jewish. It would be Hassidic.

AN EXAMPLE with a 'common' pre/eq. module:

Take a AMEK9098 module, 'shunt' the nasty/toppy crap with the low pass at say 7-9k, trap the 'mud' with the hi-pass at 50-90 range(whatever.... sweep it around, freaky). Great. Now rip the 'wool' at 130-240 narrow with the low-mid on either 'wide notch' or 'narrow bell'. Then, engage

"bell" on the low band and roll it up to the top of it's range(300) and slam a couple of dB off the low-mids 'murk' area. Now engage a similar 'Q' shape on the hi mid band and suck the hell outta the 'rat' at 6k. Now, being the sneaky fuck that you are.... Flip the top band around between bell, sheen and shelf, and boost ABOVE the low pass. Like 15-26k. That's right freaky.... 26k. Keep shifting the low pass filter point and the hi-boost against each other until you've lost the nasty 'fizz' and haven't KILLED the top end. The effect of the different 'stupid' combinations is quite an eye opener. PHASE ANOMALIES AS A CREATIVE TOOL. Don't leave home without them. Great analog EQ's FUCK SHIT UP when you abuse them. Impress me.

Similar work can be done with ANY 'money' pre/4+2 parametric eq. out there. Now the whole time you were doing those rips what where you doing?

You were boosting the 5db click stops on the mic level and goosing the trim as you WATCHED (and listened) to the signal slam the shit outta the 2". You've now ended up with a 'sensitivity' level on the front end that would flatten everything to hell and back if you disengaged the EQ in button. Your pre is running MUCH hotter on the front end. In a lot (not all) of pre/mic combinations this is HUGE.

Which brings me to my next point....

In dirt guitar recording, and ALL AE. Gain 'scheduling' is EVERYTHING. I go berserk on my staff about this. It drives me fucking crazy when I see my guys ignore this stuff. I quite literally start throwing shit around.... We have had some legendary Slipperman "Total Room Recalls" (It's a loooooonnnnggg and very ugly story). Anyhoo. You've got to find 'nominal' operational gain structure on every piece in the chain and OPTIMIZE everything. If I do this, and YOU do not..... My work will seriously outperform yours sonically 100 times out of 100. Find the 'gain range' of the various pieces and learn to exploit and abuse their strengths AND limitations.

It ain't GLAMOROUS. It takes time. It often looks like folly. It's the road to your audio salvation. Abandon it at your own peril.

My SUGGESTION to you young man..... No less than 4 bands of full parametric with lo/hi pass filters ON INPUT.

We're talking 'Nu-metal' here kids....

Piss, moan, bitch, hem and haw. Run your minimalist, purist, traditionalist, 3 bands of 'wide' EQ' mouth off all fucking day. I WILL KILL YOUR ASS deader than dickens with a great 4+2 Parametric 60 ways to Sunday. i.e. Manley 'Massive Passive'. GML8200. Shit I'll even use an Orban 624 with a small pistol to my head (NO headroom, bizarre clinical sound). Then again, if it were REALLY that simple, it wouldn't be much fun. 'Cause SOMETIMES it don't work that way. In the end yer gonna use what you can and if you're good, you'll make it happen.

"Fletcher" suggested that I document the session I have going on... The one that has been keeping me from posting here with any degree of regularity. I may. We sure as fuck are leaving "no stone unturned" doing the guitars on this record.

We have a 30 x 40 live room, a control room and 3 iso booths jammed full of: Amp heads of many different makes, features and wattages. Like.... Way more than a dozen. Walls of cabinets of differing size, style and speaker type. Also near a dozen. 2 Zillion dynamic, ribbon and condenser microphones, some from companies that are so esoteric, their own families don't know what 'Dad's making in the basement!' HOHO. EQ's (With and without attendant pres) in a myriad of flavors and styles. Some of the 'twist' combinations would probably cause R. Neve to hurl himself screaming thru a plate glass window. Mic pre's OUT THE FUCKING WAZOO. 'Fletcher' (in his evil genius) has turned me into a TOTAL pre-amp junkie- whore. Guitars of every shape, size, and description (Like over 20 of them). It looks like "48th. St. Guitars" in there. A bewildering array of compressors and limiters. New ones.... New ones that make like they're old ones. Old ones that are older than the band. Ones that are older than the producer. Ones that are older than me, and even ONE that is older than Fletcher. Active and passive splitter boxes, re-amp boxes, di boxes, stomp pedals from the 60's - current, tape echoes, rack mounted efx/pre/di fiascos, massive AC power conditioners, line drivers, gain soaks, ibp boxes, digital and analog strobe tuners.....

Kill me, I wanna make bluegrass records no wait..... Techno.

Sit around blowing lines in a Soho apartment with 600 sound modules, a Mackie Digital 8-buss and a few vintage keyboards waiting for the fashionably underweight supermodels to come and pick us up for a quick 'hummer' before we head over to the 'Slimelight' to blow our brains out dropping 'X', flailing around like silly freaks and humping in the bathrooms all night. Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud.

Somebody wanted to know about phase issues with 2 mics. I purposely stated way back in the thread that for our example here we were going to limit our discussion to (1) SM57 on (1) 4x12 cabinet for exactly that reason. Multi mic stuff is a BIG can o' wormies. Can be as simple as falling off a log... Can be a giant clusterfuck from hell. I may go there later if I really need to make my life a waking nightmare. OK, We did some placement, we did some EQ./Gain scheduling 'To Tape'... BUT..... Our original question was posed about some HUGE dynamic stuff swinging around in our signal input. Prudent mic placement, some 'front face twist' on the amp itself and some Eq. on input SHOULD have helped these little dilemmas BUT... What if yer still swinging around 10-12 Db. on 'chugs'? Time to break out the compression gear kids. All there is to it. First, let's get one thing straight.....ANY compressor is going to fuck with important parts of your signal. Especially pick attack and the 'life' of the guitar sound by hammering the transients from the input waveform.

Wait. Lets back up here. Try this: Take a guitar amp that has separate clean and dirty channels with gain controls that feed a master volume output knob. Set the 'pre' channels to about the same o'clock on both channels and crank the master volume with the dirt channel engaged. Then hit a big chord. Twist it up to 'Stage Volume'. Now, right in the middle of a riff..... SWITCH TO CLEAN. Hurts huh? FUCKING LOUD! Now switch back to the distorted channel. TINY! By comparison.

FUCKING TINY.

The pummeling impact and SHEER OPPRESSIVE VOLUME of that 'clean' sound that's ripping your face off is caused by the transients lost by the distortion process. The more distortion, the

fewer transients (Not really a totally factual statement, kind of a BLANKET answer, but close enough for our purposes here). Anyways. It's amazing how many twanker bozo's can't get a grip on the concept that increases in distortion MAKE DIRTY GUITARS SOUND SMALLER, NOT BIGGER. Nu-Metal guys are gonna have trouble buying into any flavor of this concept, and we agreed we would "Work with what they gave us" Right? 'Their Sound'. In my shop...When "Your sound" is swinging 12Db common on palm mutes WE GOTTA PROBLEM. I'm going to be compressing the living shit outta your ass one way or the other.

A lot of guitar purists state... 'NEVER COMPRESS DISTORTED GUITAR' on input or mix. The wisdom is based on observations (and their logical extrapolations) of the phenomena we just got done discussing. That is... Heavily distorted guitar sounds ALREADY ARE COMPRESSED (for lack of a better term) by 'square wave rectification' of the signal in circuit that's being used to produce the 'dirty' sound in the first place. By and large, I agree. If I can get away with clever EQ rips to 'tame' a guitar 'To tape' or 'In mix' I will always do that first. However, we live in a big shitty world full of fukwit fools who will insist upon capturing OUTRAGEOUS amounts of 'Swing' from a rig.....So I say... SMASH THE FUCK OUT OF THEM. But BE CAREFUL; if you don't set up compression correctly on input, you stand to shovel yourself into a hole you will NEVER get out of for love or money. Lousy compression CANNOT be undone after the fact. Period.

One of the best compressors in the world for smashing Nu-Metal guitars is the Empirical Labs EL-8 'Distressor'.

Here's why: The Distressor has a bunch of fun little knobs and buttons on it that can keep you from digging yourself a big grave while you gain control of a wayward signal. It is also VERY precise in terms of how the knobs on the front face OPERATE.

OK. The EL-8 to tape. NOT ALWAYS THE BEST IDEA... but one that can save yer ass in a pinch. How we gonna do it? In a nutshell. LISTEN. AND TWIST IT AROUND. Stunning huh? First I'm gonna ramble aimlessly about EQ. to tape a little more. Why?

'Cause I'm fucking mad as a hatter shooting LSD-25 into his eyeball.

Today in my 'B' room a new record has started for a solid indie we do about 6-8 records a years for....

The usual drill is, my 'kids' get sounds up 'across the desk' and the 'old man'(that would be me) runs in to take a listen/make some adjustment before tracking starts. I usually bring my Grado headphone rig {pre-amp and headset) and listen to the whole band coming off tape. Then we make any necessary revisions and I go back to whatever Satanic death march I'm currently engaged in on my schedule.

Today we've got a REALLY fine young 'Emo' band comprised of 4 kids who can write and play like motherfuckers. Not something I see every day. We have done a full length for these jokers in the past and it's 'Old Home Week' with a lot of ball busting, nicknames and general grab-assing around. As far as the guitar sound goes....these guys use WAY too much focused midrange (More Helmet-like 'bark') to ever be considered "Nu-metal" but some of the same dilemmas arose anyways.

Here's what we did. In the 'Big picture' the Guitars sounded a little veiled and indistinct. These kids play all the cool chords like a bunch silly freaks so 'clarity' is a big issue. In other words... You gotta shape the guitars (either in tracking or mix OR BOTH - See earlier post) to work for the SONGS. This is why, at first, I'm usually relatively uninterested in the 'SOLO'D' guitar sound. I need to be able to throw the faders up and BELIEVE. Believe in the band. Believe in the song. Believe the shit can be shaped around to serve our nefarious purposes later in mix. Hearing the guitars 'in the fray' with the other instruments is pivotal to accomplishing these objectives.

Today we 'formed' the guitars. on input with EQ. to sculpt out some of the 'schmotz' at 100-150hz narrow. We also hi-passed at 50hz to reduce some 'lo-freq. swing' without seriously killing our "chugg factor". Another narrow cut at 280-380hz was employed to diminish a bit of the low-mid 'murk'. A narrow boost at 900-1.2k(unusual for me) was performed because it made some of the suspended chords 'gel' better in the 'big picture'. However. This made some stuff at 2.5k start to sound 'pointy' so I notched very narrowly there. I then started to feel that our sound had gone from 'muslin' to 'peanut brittle'. The changes we had affected in the low and low-mid bands had dramatically revealed what the top end was REALLY doing.... It was still smeared and 'forced' sounding up there... What the fuck?.....

On go the 'Grados'.

Walla. Houston....We got a problem. We're flattening the mic diaphragm more than a little. Some of our 'grit' is coming from the microphone screaming in agony at the tsunami of SPL we're pounding it mercilessly with. The EQ. 'rips' have helped to reveal this. Fine. Roll down the master gain on the head.....

No fucking way.

Cabinet 'Thud' and low-mid 'Body' just went the way of the steamship/buffalo. No problem. Turn the fucking head BACK UP. Send our slave(Asst. Eng.) back into the iso to pull the mic STRAIGHT back out 1-2 inches..... HUGE DIFFERENCE. HUGE. Now our top is sounding better and our mid 'bump' is no longer needed. OK. Time to kill the 'Sizzlelean' at 8Khz. Down comes the low pass.... Shit. Sounds murky again....

HOLD IT.

PULL THE FADER ALL THE WAY DOWN. Wait 15 seconds. Roll it up. Wha-Hoo. Comparative shopping mirage! That's right. Top end is PRIMO now.

Don't be an impetuous Zorch.

When you TAKE SOMETHING AWAY and you start thinking, "Oh fuck, we can't lose THAT".... whip the fader down to silence. Get a quick re-adjust for yer ears/brain and bring it back up. You'll be AMAZED at how often this little stunt will SAVE YER ASS.

Same theory when comparing EQ'd vs. Un-EQ'd signals. Try to devise little stunts to get the two sounds to play at "PERCEIVED" unity gain when A/Bing.

Why? Because the ear LIKES 'Louder'. And louder is very often NOT better.

I have often observed young AE's struggling vainly to 'rip' EQ. a mic. input to tape, and getting very frustrated about 'All the shit they're LOSING'. "Everything sounds worse". "This EQ. is not cutting it"... Etc. Meanwhile the EQ. in 'button depress' is losing them 10 Db. of 'Steady State' gain and they are doing NOTHING to compensate for this disparity in monitoring volume. Madness.

That's WHAT YOU'VE GOT 2 FUCKING HANDS FOR, FRUITCAKE!

Grab the trim with one and compensate for the EQ. engage/disengage you're performing with the other. Or whatever methodology you devise to accomplish this... About 10 ways I can think of off the top of my head to skin this cat. Get on it. Otherwise you're gonna be grab-assing around in the fucking dark convincing yourself..."Everything sounds WORSE with the EQ. in" and other silly folk-lore style fables.

Fuck that....

EVERYTHING is EQ'd in NATURE.

You come up with a way outta this audio conundrum you gimme a call at the fucking office. Mic placement IS EQ. How hard you drive a cabinet is EQ. The instrument you select to play is EQ. The space you record in is EQ. It's ALL fucking EQ. Even when it's precipitated by 'Time Domain'. Get fucking used to it. Better yet. Have fun with it. Don't take any shit about cutting EQ. to tape.... FUCK THE OLD SCHOOL. THAT'S WHY THEY'RE THE OLD SCHOOL. THEY'LL ALL BE DEAD SOON AND WE'LL SNARK ALL THEIR WORK!!!!

Twist that shit around with reckless abandon. Kill everything/one. Make it fucking happen. Hurt somebody. Impress me. If you get something going on with a set of frequency dependent filters in a desk or outboard box instead of one of these "OTHER" E. methods. YOU DA MAN.

So where am I going with this? What's this got to do with our 'Chugga-Chugga' dynamic swing bullshit?

Well, solving THAT kettle of fish without KILLING the other critical issues of the guitar sound is the ART of doing this stuff with something that eclipses blind ambition and good intentions. In one of the earlier posts I stated that you will often be required to "SAVE THE CLIENT FROM HIMSELF". This is the case MOST of the time.

You've got to be able to anticipate WHAT you're gonna need come mix to determine HOW yer gonna put the guitars to tape. The earlier in the process you train yourself to start anticipating these needs the better off you're gonna be, and the more you're gonna be able to refine and focus your efforts and attentions in an expeditious fashion. As somebody said in Spinal Tap.... "It's all one big Globule".

OK. Back to our long forgotten EL-8 to tape.

So I get this guitar sound that everybody seems to be digging in a major way..... But NOW I've got another problem. As the kid plays palm-mute style 'chuggs', I've got to keep backing 'to tape' level down to keep from kryloning the shit outta the meters. This means that when "Twank-Puppet" plays his magnificent Amin9/sus13 "All hail the Great Pazuzu" chords, they're showing up about 15Db shy of 'ChuggVille' city limits....

Not good; Time for some SPANKY.

Input Smash: What you don't hear can kill you.

When you're recording dirt guitars there are a few things to remember that are pretty easy to forget. 'Distortion masking' is one of them.

OK.

When you record an acoustic guitar it's pretty easy to hear distortion in the chain.... It's also pretty easy to figure out WHERE it's coming from. Let's say some idiot jams an AT 4041 RIGHT up on the sound hole of some other zero bashing away with reckless abandon on a Gibson Jumbo. Pretty solid chance yer gonna hear the diaphragm screaming in agony. Easy.

OK. Now let's imagine the mic gets pulled back to a decent distance but you ram-a-jam the mic pre gain like a muthafucka and THAT generates a shitload of nasty clipping downstream. Easy. Back off the pre, you prick... That's more fucking like it. Almost sounds like a recording now...

OK. Now imagine you decide to smash the fuck outta yer acoustic with a compressor and you back the attack off to the point where a lot of 'Front' is spanking into the compressor and you compound the problem by squelching the release so fucking fast, the output is starting to sound like a ProCo Turbo Rat.... Easy. Grab a little more of the transient component by speeding up the attack and add a little length to the release so the compressor stops distorting as much.

OK. Now you're BANGING that bad boy's output like a MADMAN into the tape machine with peaks so ripping the VU needles are slamming into the pegs like a symphony of homicidal paperclips. No big. Back the 'To tape' gain back to the point where you've got some cool tape compression going but yer not adding a shitload of tape distortion to the fray.

Totally easy, Mel Bay book#1 shit right?

OK, Guess what? YOU GOTTA DO THE SAME SHIT FOR DIRT GUITARS ON INPUT, ALL THE SAME STUFF..... PROBLEM IS.....

YOU GOTTA FIND THOSE VERY SAME ARTIFACTS IN A SEA OF INSTRUMENT DISTORTION. So right about now somebody's gotta be saying.....

WHY FUCKING BOTHER? It's all distortion right? Who fucking cares? MORE DIRT! RIGHT?

WRONG.

When you go into mix on this stuff downstream, you are going to be hating life as you start to rip and goose various frequencies to make your guitars work in your mix... And you're gonna find a WORLD OF FUCKING HURT contained in the differences in 'Diaphragmatic Distortion', 'Pre-

Amp Distortion', 'Gain Reduction Artifact Distortion', 'Tape Distortion', and f1i 'Source Distortion' f0i0 . Which is basically the ONLY form of distortion that doesn't sound like COCK AND BALLS after the fact. Any of those other guys are the totally satanic 'Gifts that keep on giving'.

Those other forms of distortion are like herpes..... You may not see those little suckers on yer pee-pee till it's TOO LATE. And you've already started banging the crap outta Mrs. Right. The babe of your dreams. Guess what, loomer? She's GONNA be PISSED when she finds out you gave her the 'Bumpies'. She WILL NOT be taking fond memories of you into her next relationship.

VIGILANCE IS 90% of great 'Tracking AE'. Don't be a prick. Check yer math.

So, yer slamming the shit outta tape on the chugs WITHOUT an EL-8 (Or whatever) in the path. So you whip one of those bad boys across the bus output and you start to dial around. Start with the release in the medium-fast/medium range. It will make it easier to hear the effect of the attack control settings, which is the first thing you should be concerned with. As the 'Rocket Scientist' twanks away on his mutant ukulele, you start adjusting the attack to figure out how 'long' the pick attack is..... That's right. Every distorted guitar tone is going to have it's own little 'wave shape profile' you gotta figure out to gain control over the sound. Sweep the attack knobs setting from fastest possible to midstream and LISTEN to what is happening to the 'Pick Attack' portion of the signal. You should be able to get a good feel for how much total duration is contained in the 'Attack' portion of the signal. Screw around with input gain, ratio and threshold to exaggerate and reduce the effect of compression to confirm your observations. You're not trying to make it SOUND like ANY-FUCKING-THING at this juncture.. Yer trying to figure out HOW the compressor is gonna be able to 'Grab' the signal. You will start to see a trend in how far back you gotta 'offset' the attack and not KILL the life of the pick attack. The slower attack times will sound more 'real' and 'exciting' but you will have to use higher and higher ratios and lower and lower thresholds to get the activity you need as far as gain reduction and signal control.

Word to the wise. Be very careful about banging all the attack off a signal as dense and 'Steady State' as a heavily distorted guitar. You fuck up the attack on input and you will never be able to get the excitement back in the track no matter HOW you Eq. it later. EVER.

On the other hand, you gotta get yer 'Nu-Metal' Bozo to tape with some moderately sane semblance of dynamic swing between 'Chugs' and 'Chords'. In the most simple, Single(Non-frequency selective) compression situation, what you know about how to set up the attack and release envelope is going to be the single biggest harbinger of your potential success or failure. Now take a similar approach to the release envelope. Fool with yer release time and check out the effect of lengthening the 'let-go' activity of the unit. The faster release times will sound more 'exciting' and 'real' but will get you back into hot water when 'Einstein' starts 'Chugging'. You've got to try to find a happy medium where it's under control but it doesn't sound 'Stepped on'.

Chances are, in really bad situations... No single '1 Compressor' scheme is gonna cut it.... Might be time to check the alternatives.

- a) Frequency dependent recording schemes: Both dynamically and Non-Dynamically realized. There are a SLEW of them.
- b) Multiple unit dynamic reduction scenarios.
- c) Phase and Time Domain stunts.

The big 3.

=====
On 29 May 2003 23:43 austin wrote: Quote:

Slipperman, A question from the gallery... how much trouble can one get into with diaphragm distortion... with an SM57?

That seems to be the real question to ask, given that the others would be easier to spot by checking a peak led or fiddling with a knob... right?

=====
A LOT of trouble to be sure. The 'spatter' from the relentless impactation of the SM57 head element is a little 'Trojan horse' that can REALLY bust yer balls when you rip away some of the 'Fat' in mix. To avoid this fiasco, I generally will use a pair of hi quality headphones(Grados) at pretty low volume where I try to twist away the same stuff on the monitor output that I may end up cutting as I fit the track into the 'Big Picture' later in mix.

i.e. Hi pass at 100, shelf down 1-5 db @250, narrow rips swept between 300-3.5k. The artifacts are easier to spot if you have the kid alternate between chugging and sustained chords. Each of these checks are done and undone separately in a sequence of twists. If it's present in the signal, you may actually hear the spatter 'swell' into various parts of sustaining chords better, depending on how much saturation/pre-gain the guys is using on his rig.

The 'spatter' is broadband and can be 'pointed' in a whole load of different areas depending on input but..... It has a different 'transient' quality to it that makes it VERY dangerous. Its duration is longer than the pick attack and much shorter than the 'steady state' signal. It often shifts around somewhat unpredictably playing havoc with the uniformity of the overall sound.

Like anything else, the devil is in the details, and a little bit of early vigilance and perseverance in monitoring will save you a world of trouble in the long run and teach you what to 'listen for' so this little drill starts takes less and less time to do. Hope this answers the question.

Gotta flee.

Be back soon.

Well. Here we go again.

I'm so completely fried tonight it's a joke. I don't give a fuck, I've been promising another installment for so long I'm starting to feel like a real asshole here.

Lemme just say this for openers.

Distorted guitar is just one of a bunch of instruments in any heavy music mix.

Its 'size' is going to be largely a function of its comparative energy, both as a function of 'full bandwidth' and 'frequency dependent' amplitude swing. Or even more likely (in the case of distorted guitar) 'steady state' power in the mix IN RELATION to the OTHER instruments and their intermittent vs. 'steady state' persistency.

Here's the deal. A lot of the effectiveness of heavy guitars in mix, and indeed, much of the effectiveness of art in general, relies heavily on CONTRAST.

Perceptions of size, shape, texture and color, that are all inter-dependent in their various relationships with each other to provide this contrast.

WhaddaI Mean? Speak human.

Well. Lets make it simple. Back in the days when humans were allowed to attend my mixes (my assistants are NOT human, trust me on this one), I was regularly presented with various recordings culled from the CD collections of (usually) well meaning band members to 'point me in the right direction' regarding Sounds.

Ahh yes. SOUNDS.

Anyhoo. Some kid in a metal band would earnestly explain to me that "Dude!.... The new 'Machine Head' record has the heaviest guitars EVER". You gotta make our shit sound like THAT.

Right.

This type of moron is a prime example of an individual who needs a crash course in contrast, a brief 'life threatening' beating....I mean, tutorial, in the roles of relationships between instruments and the ensuing perceptions that appear in generated sound.

Yep. It's gonna get weird now for a bit.

I hate to do this to those of you who want to get into the nuts and bolts of 'heavy guitar. mix EQ'. But yer gonna hafta bear with me for a bit here 'cause.....

WE GOTTA go ALL the way back to the VERY BEGINNING to start to get a grip on what the BIG PICTURE is here.

OK.

Most (not all, with the advent of CMI's) musical instruments, and the poor bastards cursed with playing them, are integrated human controlled sound pressure transduction systems. That is, some guy stands in a room, straps on a guitar, picks up a plectrum, strikes a string (or 2 or 6), the string resonates in response to the applied mechanical energy at a frequency determined by

a combination of it's tension, it's length, and it's diameter(which partially facilitates it's range of frequency vs. total tension)a pickup converts that mechanical energy into electrical current containing both frequency and amplitude, it passes down a guitar cable, into a pre-amplifier/EQ, onto an amplifier(these two are often an integrated system, as we know), and out to a speaker(or often a number of speakers in an enclosure) which excurse and create sound pressure changes at the same frequency(s) in the acoustic environ that those speakers are located in.

Those sound pressure changes contract and expand(the actual terms are compression and rarefaction) the air in the room, this energy zips into our eardrums, our eardrums resonate in sympathy and in turn convert these pulses into human electrical energy that gets loaded onto the 'hell bound express' and shipped right into the brain.

That's when we go.... "Dude.....YOU ROCK!!".

Or maybe. "Dooooooooode.... YOU SUCK!"

Anyways.

These HUMAN CONTROLLED SYSTEMS of SPL generation are an INTEGRATED system that stretches all the way from the skill/intentions of the player to the movement of the speaker cone in the room.

1 (hopefully) harmonious system that is inter-dependent(to varying degrees and often in a bewilderingly complicated series of relationships) ON EVERY SINGLE COMPONENT IN THE SYSTEM.

Again.

1 INTEGRATED SYSTEM, DEPENDENT TO VARYING DEGREES ON EVERY COMPONENT IN THE FUCKING SYSTEM.

One more time because it's going to become a fucking mantra here in this thread.....

EVERY SINGLE COMPONENT IN THE WHOLE FUCKING SYSTEM MATTERS TO SOME FUCKING DEGREE, IN SOME FUCKING RESPECT.

The fucking pick matters.

Dude.

The FUCKING PICK MATTERS.

About 26 horribly tangential and seemingly endless posts from now you are going to see where I am going with this(and form a mob and lynch me).

Right now it's 4:15am, I've been mixing a 3 guitar - 3 singer screamo band(where are all the NORMAL metal bands now? Everybody's a fucking PIONEER these days) for 13 hrs. and I've got a CRUSHING migraine.

I realize that for some of you this first new installment has been kind of a 'low yield' bore but..... I PROMISE YOU.

YOU BETTER START TAKING THE SHIT YOU LIKE DOWN OFF THE WALLS because I'm gonna keep running at this until everybody who even remotely gives a fuck, is up to speed with my utterly clueless, Pseudo-Scientific, wacko theories on what is up with....

A PROBLEM WITH DISTORTED GUITAR PT III.

Best to all.

SM.

Let the games resume.

OK. We hit on 2 basic but crucial principles in the 1st installment.

1.) The comparative energies and overall spectral disposition of the instruments that accompany dirt guitars. in a mix are going to dramatically affect our end perception of the sonic silhouette of those guitars. We're gonna get back to this later... HANG TIGHT.

2.) From recording thru mix. Dirt guitars are a TOTALLY integrated system of sound generation that is WILDLY dependent upon ALL KINDS of factors. Some obvious and some much less so.

Lemme give ya some examples here tonight to illuminate principle #2:

I mix a lot of records where I have some degree of control over what transpires during tracking.

I mix some records where I don't.

Given the first scenario, I try to stick my head into sessions on occasion to see how things are going... what's being accomplished. And how.

Here's some mistakes I see happen over and over again(in either scenario) regarding recording distorted guitar as a WHOLE SYSTEM.

1. Wrong instrument for the player or sound.
2. Wrong amp for the player or instrument/sound.
3. Wrong 'twist'(settings) on the front face of the amp for the player, instrument or sound.

And the BIGGEST KILLER OF ALL. The king-daddy-no-gonna-be-able-to-undo-this-clusterfuk-mistake-later that'll kill ya deader than Dickens if you don't AT LEAST PARTIALLY nip it in the bud....

4. WRONG SOUND FOR THE SONG/OBJECTIVES OF THE BAND IN FINAL PRODUCT

These 4 points are where the shit hits the fan.

Because:

- A. Most guys have 'Their sound'. The sound they make on 'their rig' with 'their guitar'.
- B. Most guys develop all kind of mechanisms to ACCOMPLISH their role in the song/band sound, by a SELF CONTAINED SYSTEM OF TRANSDUCTION of which THEY COMPRISE THE HUMAN ELEMENT.
- C. Most guys don't know you from Adam and are scared to death about taking your advice regarding something that has become a familiar and comforting 'blankie' for them... Often over a NUMBER of YEARS. Plus as the 'Sonic Author' of their guitar sound... They don't appreciate you telling them their BABY IS UGLY.

There are potentially some inherent wisdoms hidden in these assessments after all....

This is where record production becomes a seemingly endless set of 'LIFE SKILLS', not to be taken lightly or for granted.

Your job is to find out WHAT IS:

Superfluous.

Harmful.

Counterproductive.

Stupid.

AND ELIMINATE IT:

Find out WHAT IS:

Vital.

Useful.

Artistically relevant.

Smart.

AND MAGNIFY IT:

WITHOUT

Bumming or freaking the player out.

Diminishing the effectiveness and focus of the player, the ensemble, AND THE SONG.

DID I MENTION THE FUCKING SONG?

See even a church-roasting, goat worshipping, nun-stalking Black-metal head from a frigid outpost in rural NORWAY has taken the time to write some SONGS(Unless death metal became free-jazz in the last 25 minutes unbeknownst to me).

AND THE SONGS(and by proxy, what you do as an AE to promote and nurture the objectives of the songs) ARE THE BOTTOM OF THE FUCKING PYRAMID, KIDS.....

The part that holds the whole fucking she-bang up

Without providing the proper sounds to SUPPORT THE ROLE OF THE INSTRUMENT IN THE SONG, WE ALL BETTER JUST GO HOME AND CATCH THE FUCKING GAME ON TV.

CAUSE WE AIN'T DOING SHIT WORTH TALKING ABOUT HERE IN THE FUCKING STUDIO.

Let's imagine a specific scenario that could happen to ANYBODY(Like probably 25 poor miserable AE bastards all over the world last week alone....).

Let's imagine 'Banjo-Boy' plays in an Screamo-Metal 'crossover'(doesn't the word 'crossover' seem to be losing some of it's effectiveness lately?) band that uses a lot of suspended chord voicings, displaced roots, and odd time signatures interspersed with faster chugging passages and plenty of clean guitar breakdowns....

BUT THE PROBLEM IS.....

He's REALLY INTO THE 'Morbid Angel' guitar sound.

Don't laugh, kids are fucking crazy.

A lot of young musicians are much better at hearing what works for SOMEBODY ELSE, IN SOME OTHER SITUATION, than they are at figuring out what works for themselves/their music/their songs.

SO ARE A LOT OF AE'S

That's where the shit can and often DOES hit the fan.

OK. His 'chugging' sound strikes a pretty decent balance between 'swing' and 'tight' and he's a good palm-muter that can, and does control the duration and depth of the 'chugging' shit pretty well. Hoo-ray. ALL IS NOT LOST.

Not yet.

Problem is....

His Drop-C tuned PRS sounds like COCK AND BALLS when he plays his pretty little suspended chords. You can't hear much difference between a C#5 barre-chord and a C#9. The ninth is getting HAMMERED by the amount to saturation he's dialed on the amp head... Or is it? Will a change in guitar be more effective than a change in 'twist' on the amp-face? What else does he got with him...? Maybe his old "It's cool but I never use it" - 1972 SG standard. Plug it in. Those fuckers can CHIME like a bitch and just might make the difference between disaster and salvation.

OK... So you try it....

IT'S AWFUL.

It's too fucking OLD.

It chimes alright... Sounds like a fucking busted church-bell being hydro-phoned by a crack head to a submarine salvage vehicle thru a Korean-War era walkie-talkie.

Great. Strike 1.

Kid thinks you're a fucking retard.

OK. Twist the gain down a little.... That's a LOT BETTER BUT.... Now he's got that look on his face like somebody farted.....

His BLANKIE. Yer KILLING HIS BLANKIE, YOU ASSHOLE.

OK. Try twisting up the mids to get a little clarity back, as you do this you may be able to drop the gain a little, as the preamp starts to saturate more in the 'hurt zone'.

This is helping but, of course, the first thing the kid starts to do is CHUG again..... "Dude, the chugs are sounding 'bleackey' he sputters". And ya know what? He's RIGHT, the chugs are coming apart. Very 'bleackey'(A technical term they teach at GIT).

Houston. We got a problem.

How you gonna get around this?

I can think of about 3 ways RIGHT OFF the top of me noggin...

Can you guys?

Kick it around if you'd like...

I'll be back soon.

SM.

OK.

Here we go.

I was chatting online with a buddy of mine the other day, and he says...

"Dude.... are you ever gonna get back to that aimless ramble on Distorted Guitars @ PSW"?

Eek.

Man. It's so fucking endless.

But... Fark it... let's just keep chipping away.

Sooooo.....

I started thinking about the various records I have done over the years, and the original question presented by 'carnederes' in the now almost 2 year old thread again.... And I remembered an album I did about 4-5 years ago for a very talented, and now(sadly) defunct, heavy rock outfit from NY.

I was always guardedly happy with the sound of that particular recording(a VERY rare occurrence for me... As I have stated here and elsewhere ad nauseum - I find ALL my work pretty much unlistenable, as do most other people...HOHOHO) and the thought struck me....

"This bands guitar. sound presented many of the same dilemmas, in both tracking and mix, that the original post asked to have addressed".

"Maybe I should pull the reels out and have a listen to the 'source trax' for that specific record".

Sound of labored steam driven machinery and arcing Van De Graff Generators

"Might help to focus my mind on the more important aspects of recording dirt guitars and keep the 'ramble' down..."

Right.

Remind me NOT to do THAT again anytime soon....

Anyhoo.

I've been looking for an excuse to determine which channels on my main tracking desk need to be re-capped so....

KILL 2 Birdies with one stoner rock.

One of the assistants goes scurrying into the tape locker and eventually fishes out the masters. We pile into the proper control room, and he puts the thing up.

The FIRST thing I notice is....

IT ALREADY KINDA SOUNDS LIKE A RECORD....

Yep. Faders up.

No creative/corrective bullshit(Eq./Compression) on anything yet.

I'm thinking No shit!?!?

I'm kinda amazed by this and it gets the old Slipper-Noggin-Espresso-Maker set to 'fine grind'.

The assistant is pretty familiar with the band, but has never heard this particular record, and is occasionally commenting on various things in the fray as I proceed to just solo here and there, and noodle a tad with the various instrument tracks. So basically.... he's checking the SONGS out while I am fooling around finding approximate fader lies and panning positions, starting some simple corrective EQ's etc...

"Man... This really IS a great record..." He chimes in after about 8-10 minutes of this process....

"Yep.." I reply absentmindedly... "I love these kids..... They know how to play their own music.... Kinda MIXES ITSELF Right?"

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZTTTTTTTT.

system reboot

Ya know....

Sometimes you hit those(admittedly diminutive) cathartic moments.

It is the fortuitous ineptitude inherent in the appearance of these minor epiphanies that I use as a glib internal rejoinder to the unspoken daily interrogative.... WHY? am I STILL doing this AE shit after WAAAYYYYY too many years of it to be relegated to a state even remotely resembling 'sanity'.

So, I proceed to stop the tape machine and sit and talk with the assistant for about an hour, to attempt to explain WHY I think our mutual assessments of the inherent workability of this particular recording are based in some profound truths.

Some fairly obvious and some a bit more oblique.

My next post will focus on these.

I'm gonna make 'em shorter and more frequent(My posts in this thread).

This will certainly result in MORE, rather than LESS, 'tangential posting'.

Please accept my apologies in advance for this unfortunate situation.

My poor sodden cranium is restricted to a single pair of 'modes'.

"Chaotic"

and

"Entropic".

HOHO-Somebuddi-bludgeon-me-HO.

"He fell from a great height, and landed squarely on is 'ead, twen e' was just a wee bit of a lad"
(A teary-eyed SlipperMom explaining the boys behavior in public).

OR:

Dr. Smith to Robot: "Spare me your poisonous platitudes you floundering flunky!!!"

SM.

Imagine yer 2 buss is a telephone booth.

Imagine yer mix is a bus stop full of loomers from a local college cheering section.

You might have.....:

Some fat guys, some skinny guys, some chicks with big asses, some dudes who play rugby, a coupla jockeys, an occasional basketball player. Ya might even have baby Mastodons(Hey! He might be the mascot!!!) Etc.

Yer mission, should you be stupid or crazy enough to accept it, is to jam all these characters into the telephone booth in a fashion where.....

- 1.) The smartest and most important guys can reach the handset.
- 2.) You can close the door and the booth is still primarily intact.
- 3.) As few people as possible die in the process.

Now these might not be THE ONLY objectives you'd be concerned with in any given mix... But these would be the ones you'd ALWAYS be dealing with.

Fer instance: You might ALSO decide you wanted to be able to:

- 1.) Take a photo of the whole shebang where the chick with the great face and stunning lungs is jammed up against the front glass looking like she's getting rogered by the drum major.
- 2.) 3 different guys alternate placing and answering the phone whilst the mastodon whips up a enchanting cheese fondue and screens unreleased Fellini films on a stolen eggplant/camcorder.
- 3.) You keep as much of the original clothing and body shape/mass of the landscaped Gospel choir intact whilst shrinking the rest of the occupants down to personal voodoo doll size and set them to work powering the South Bayonne Elks Lodge on tiny Velcro hamster wheels.

All common scenarios.

See it every day.

OK.

Be right back.

Duty beckons.

SM.

10am. in the fucking morning.

No sleep yet.

Insomnia again.

Here we go...

My preceding post was obviously referring to the various elements in a mix, and how you, as the mix AE, would have to determine WHO (everybody usually) would be shaped, and HOW they would be shaped.

When yer up against dense mixes like the kind ya get in various 'Heavy Music' forms. The way ya manage to fit everybody in the phone booth can get pretty convoluted... and even stomp-down BIZARRE at times.

This is because mixing most 'heavy music' records is like trying to find order and lucidity in a recording of a Cathedral Pipe Organ, all stops out, randomly veering between Handel's Messiah, Ginestera's 2nd and a coupla Bach Fugues... in a Titanium kitchenware foundry, while a gaggle of enraged PCP snorting gorillas with bullhorns conduct a demolition derby with cement mixers against the soothing cacophony of a nearby landslide/tsunami/heavy artillery exchange.

And that's on the lighter side of the genre.

BTW. I am dead serious about the previous mix analogy.

It is EXACTLY what I'm thinking of when I sit behind the desk on half of these records.

Anyhoo.

Basically, yer FUCKED.

You got a half million belligerent yahoos all competing for the same lousy 22 cubic feet of phone booth, and they are all insistent that every last minute detail of the stitch of their gogo boots AND the gigantic pink penis parade float is "cast in stone", "artistically relevant", "imperative to accomplishing the song objectives" and of course.... "My FAVORITE PART OF THE SONG..... NO WAIT.... MY FAVORITE PART OF THE RECORD".

This is why I mix alone.

So I can curse and rebuke God while hurling random breakable items around the control room.....

So I can threaten to stab, bludgeon, shoot, burn, gut, fillet the cocks of, draw and quarter, hang, crucify, and otherwise generally express my extreme displeasure at the mindless assemblage of cretins that DID THIS TO ME....

The Band and/or Producer.

I usually do this till I'm eventually discovered the next morning... (like THIS morning) huddled in the machine locker, in fetal position, shivering... covered with sweat, blood, puke and piss... rubbing my own shit thru my hair like it's Vitalis.

But HEY!!!!!!

I'm KIDDING!!!!

KIDDING!!!!!!

HOHOHO.

Not Vitalis.

Nexus 'Super-hold' styling gel.

Soooooooo....

Back to the subject at hand. Here's the funny thing. All art finds its impact in contrast. And on a SECOND BY SECOND BASIS, during the course of a multi-track mix down....

If EVERYTHING IS BIG....

NOTHING IS BIG.

This is da muthafukka.

How we gonna get around this?

Be back sooner than you might be wishing.

Can't say if it's gonna get any clearer.

XOXOXOX

SM.

Yep. It's me. I'm on a fucking mission now.

I had a mix job slated for this week and the producer decide to go to Amsterdam without notifying anybody.. Band/Label/God/Management/Homeland Security....

Me.

Anyhoo.

Tracking is not totally completed for ANY ONE song.

And this guy will have a BABY if anybody tracks ANYTHING "BEHIND HIS BACK..."

Great.

Genius move huh?

Whhooooooooeee...

So..... Nothing but time and insomnia on my hands for a day or two... Let's see if I can communicate ANYTHING worth hearing. That would be novel.

So... As I'm listening to this record I was speaking about earlier in this thread... here's some of the shit I was up against. And how (I'm supposing here.... 'cause I sure as fuck don't REALLY remember doing the record) I dealt with it.

Let's do a track by track rundown. And we'll go thru the early paces and problems.

BRB. I'm gonna get a cigar, a cup of Java and get over to the Front Desk workstation where I can put the basics up on the DAW/Grado rig, without going thru the clusterfuck of laying out a desk for mix. The big room is the only room not working tonight and I ain't going in that fucking hellhole/prison cell unless somebuddiz payin' me.

A cursory glance at psychological similarities between my mindset on that matter (entering the mix room unpaid) and the mindset of your average provider of "commercial companionship" (A prostitute) are quite telling....

As I said.

Be Right Back.

XOXOXOX

Back. Hello FullCrumb. Glad there's somebody out there... HOHOHO.

As my mother used to say in her best Rhode Island accent ... "Big Tough Guy....
LOOOOVVVVEEEE ta hear ya-self tawk"

Ahh me. Dear old Moms.... Anyhoo.

Band is 2 guitars. Bass. Drums. LdVox. Tuned to "C".

Record was cut to 2" for basics... Sub mixed to another reel for vocal overdubs and locked up 48x for mix. It was done in Summer 1999. Back in de daze before I was really dumping EVERYTHING from the 2" into the DAW for mix down.

I don't mix IN the box these days, but I do mix FROM it

Ohh... And I didn't track this record. I just mixed it.

So I'm gonna go thru a 'verbalization' of my first impressions of the tracking/performances as I listen thru this thing with 'faders up'. Or as close as I can muster on a fucking DAW with headphones....

Here's the track layout for the first song.

Anything saying 'desk' is a Amek Mozart RN pre-amp running in 'direct' mode.

Duped into DAW from Reel #1(m)

- 1.) Hats - AKG451/Desk - Sounds like a HP is engaged @ about 80Hz
- 2.) Kick - Sony C-48 in Fig8/pad in/Desk/Intelligate - Sounds like he ripped the mids on input. Nothing crazy, but there's not much between 250-1.5k
- 3.) Snare top - MayEA57/Desk/Intelligate(Master) - sounds like HP @ 120Hz - Narrow boost @ 8k?.. it's too 'sparkly' to be a flat EA. Maybe sucked in @ 800Hz?(No 'honky stuff')
- 4.) Snare bottom - SM98/Desk/Intelligate(Slave) - Sounds pretty 'real' maybe a HP@ 100?
- 5.) Tom1 - SM98/API 312 - Sounds like "Full bandwidth" 'hard' to tape
- 6.) Tom2 - As above
- 7.) Floor Tom - As above
- 8.) Ride - SM81/Desk - Sounds like it's ripped 'Shelf' @ 150Hz HARD and boosted narrow @ 1.5k(Heavy ride bell 'ping' voice).. The top sounds untouched to my ears.
- 9.) LOH - AKG360/API 312 - Sounds untouched
- 10.) ROH - Ditto above - sounds like a 'wide X-Y' to me... It's not marked.
- 11.) Mono Room - U67 card/pad in/RCA BA-6A as both pre and compressor - this sounds like it's on the other side of a Gobo facing AWAY from the kit to my ears... Not marked. Tough to tell.... It's SMASHED to all fuck... HOHOHO. Loving it.

Drums are cool. The use of the dreaded 'Intelligate' is cracking me up.... The kid is a really solid hitter/player and he plays NOTHING as far as ghost strokes as far as I can tell... It must have taken the AE a bit of time to set up the master/slave thing on the top/bottom snare pair.... It's really well done and try as I might I'm having trouble finding ANYTHING missing as I compare the room/overheads with the close mic'd snare duo. His also manage to get a really solid and tailored signal out of the kick drum. The gate is only dropping about 6-8 db. from the signal upon closure... It's almost subtle in solo, and fucking INVISIBLE in the fray... Tracking guy = "Old

guy"... HOHOHO. No shit.

The drummer is playing to a click and, as I already mentioned, he's solid as fuck. He really hits the drums in the center and he plays with authority. He's is also sparing in his use of cymbals.... And it's really killing me because I've been dealing with clueless assholes that beat the fuck outta the brass 24/7 lately.... It's all the fucking rage now for some god-forsaken reason.

I blame Al Van Halen. HOHOHO.

12.) unused

13.) Bass (SVT?) rig - RE20/Desk/No compression marked, but I think he's hitting it with something(probably lightly) as it's pretty fucking stable but I can't really hear it working... It's GOTTA be EQ'd as well... It's INSANELY perfect sounding to my ears for a band tuned to 'C natural'.

14.) Bass DI - Sans DI/Desk/DL241 x (2) - Funny... Sounds VERY clean for a Sans track. Definitely EQ'd to fuck and back. Also a great sounding track. This kid is a KILLA player with a hammering sounding bass.... How many times do ya see THAT? HOHOHO. Kill me.

15.) Gtr1a - AKG-D12e/Desk/TLA C1 x (2) Holy Christ. Forgot we had those(TLA-C1)... I usually HATE them. Sounds pretty fucking good. A little bit of 'pumping' on the big stuff, but no big deal... this has GOTTA be EQ'd to fuck and back... It's totally focused. Sounds like a Bogner rig.... It's something \$\$\$.... Whatever. Another great player with a brutal sounding rig. I may return to church after hearing this track... But, as I tell my Moms on occasion.... don't count on it...

16.) Gtr1b - SM57/Desk - All it says... Sounds like all it IS, also... MUCH less polished input sound, but still pretty cool. A little ratty on top... It's another mic on the same rig/performance as track 15.

17.)

18.) Gtr2a-b: Same shit as 15/16.) Double tracked. REALLY well played double track. These fucking kids KILL me.... Ahh me. WTF? Dear God.... Please give me bands that play like these guys and I promise to stop forcing buses full of old people off remote mountain roads forever.... or at least cut it down to one bus per month.

19.) Gtr3a - D112/Desk/DL241 x (2) - this track has also gotta be EQ'd to death on input... Same type of deal as the other kids rig... Sounds like a Les Paul/5150 to my ears... Ain't marked... Wait.. It says "Modern Hi" on one pair and "Vintage Hi" on the other... WTF is that? I can't remember.... I should know... Anyhoo. Another really 'shaped' sound. Another great player... Seeing a trend here? LOL. Fuuuuccckkkk.. These kids are like fucking machinery in 'solo'... Fucking DYING laughing here... In Heavy Metal... Precision is ALL. ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN AT ALL TIMES.... HAHAHA. Yes indeedy.

20.) Gtr3b - AT25/Desk - BIZARRE.... Raw city again... But sounds MONEY when combined with the other channel. Same deal. 2 mics on one rig/performance.

21.)

22.) Gtr4a/b - Same shit as 19/20 as far as the mics/pres but a much LOWER GAIN sound. Great definition in the individual notes in the chords... you can really hear the intervals when he plays the 9th and 11th chords. This is the track pair marked "Vinti Hi". Adds CRAZY clarity to the 19/20 pair when ya sum 'em.

23.) unused. Looks like an erased scratch vox from the track sheets

24.) SMPTE NDF30

Duped into DAW From reel #1(s)

25-32.) 8 channel Sub mix from reel #1(m)

Kick
Snare
Img L
Img R
Bass
Gtr1
Gtr2
Add Guitars
Svox

33-35.) Lead vox - U87/ATI Pro-6 - One of the first/best of the channel in a box thingies. Ripped and smashed and treated to hell and back. Sounds pretty DONE. I can hear the limiter firing a bit on the totally over the top stuff, but it's OK overall.

36.) Hi Harm - same chain as 33-35.

37.) Hi Harm 2 - Not marked - sounds like the same chain on a different day.... It's a little darker... Not crazy different.. Just a tad.

38.) "Jim Track" - Coles 4038/TLA-EQ1/Orban 622/EL-8 x (2) - LMFBO. If this is a Coles ribbon.... I'm the fucking Pope.... It's so ripped and pummeled with Eq. and compression it's fucking HYSTERICAL. The track is called "Jim" because it sounds an AWFUL lot like the singing style of one California based Rock legend who died in Paris before 'Nam wrapped up. Why he's using that God-fucking-awful TLA pre for this track I WILL NEVER KNOW..... Boredom probably.... In the end it sounds great... Retarded.... But great. Ahh me. The evil that men do...

39.) Double track of the madness on 38.)

40.) Scream vox - SM58/TC line driver box/Marshall JCM800/Stewart DI(must be on 'speaker' setting)/Desk/DBX172 - How the fuck he got the front end of this to hit the 800 like he did... I have no fucking idea.... Anyhoo. SOUNDS BRUTAL. It's kinda 'microphonic' at times(a little boingy and soggy sounding).... but overall... It's fucking HAIR RAISING. Sounds like the TC box is doing some gating on the 'front end' and the 172 is doing an 'expansion' thingy on the ass end. It's working... Whatever it is.... It's getting everything ya need without much 'schmoltz' to tape. I don't see any compression marked. Looks like he didn't need it.

41-47.) unused.

48.) SMPTE NDF30

Well.... It's interesting...

The guy who tracked this has been working with me (on and off) for more than a fucking decade... He knows what he likes and he ain't afraid to paint my ass into a corner if he thinks it's gonna give him a better sounding record. Both as far as 'end product' and 'work in progress'... In other words... He likes to have the band feel the recording is "Already sounding like a record" as he works on it with them. God Bless. You gotta have a lotta skill, some real foresight and big fucking balls to get away with that shit with any degree of regularity... and this guy does just that on this particular band as far as I'm concerned.

So anyhoo....

I'm at the end of this mess for tonight. It took forever to do in the fucking DAW, but at least it's ready to rock now, for future installments, and I'm finally feeling like I can get some sleep if I go home and lay down. So I'm gonna try.

I'm coming back tomorrow and we're gonna start ripping shit apart and talking specifically about how things affect each other in the big picture as we prep for mix... It's probably gonna take forever... But short of bringing ya here, I can't think of HOW to do this effectively any other way.

In the end... Not being able to HEAR what I'm hearing... It's probably a low yield system. But I feel compelled to finish what I started way back in 2002, and I'm hoping that the brave souls who wade thru this mess will pick up SOMETHING practical... Or at least that some PRACTICAL CONCEPTS and METHODOLOGIES will be conveyed by the time I finish.

XOXOXOX.

SM.

Ahh me...

Here we go.

OK.

So I have no rules about how I approach a mix... I just get going and see where shit leads me. I change my mind about EVERYTHING like a fucking madman.... and yer gonna see this.... LOTS. I'm not above RIPPING the whole fucking mix down and STARTING again... Although I seem to do it less and less as I get older.

In general principle: I am a "De-Obstructionist" style mixer. I find the shit that is KEEPING me from hearing the SONG and I ALTER it in some way so that it stops annoying me as much in the fray. I am also a GAIN STRUCTURE FREAK... I am obsessed with finding the 'sweet spot' in where various pieces of equipment SOUND AND WORK BEST and keeping them there THRU the mix process.... A lot easier SAID THAN DONE in my experience... Especially if you use parallel bussing' and 'multing' as much as I do.... The shit hits the fucking fan "Upstream" and "Downstream" as you revise your mixes and you end up chasing the faders like a fucking lunatic if you don't LAYOUT yer desk properly in the first place.

In this case, because I'm hating life on this ITB thingy, and I can't just 'Lay my shit out' across 60-80 moving faders... I'm gonna try the old. "Fishing/Triage Expedition" approach... In other words... SKIM thru the channels picking shit that's bugging me and finding the 'range of possibilities' in the various treatments I try on the various tracks. Flipping back and forth between 'solo' and full mix.

As another horrifically tangential side note: When I work on analog mixing desks, one of my favorite modes to work in is "Solo in Front", a mode offered on a coupla of the bigger frame desks that allows you to solo a track(or tracks) AGAINST a user controlled backdrop of the total mix.

So, for instance you can take an instrument in 'solo' and with the sweep of one dial, MOVE it's VOLUME positioning anywhere from "All I hear is the soloed instrument" to "All I hear is the soloed instrument in it's normal volume relationship to the SUMMATED MIX"... It's pretty fucking handy and it saves a lotta time... If ya think about it for a minute and ya think about HOW you hafta ADJUST yer ears/brain abruptly between "Soloed" and "Full mix" you'll start getting an idea of how and why a guy could get married to this feature. You can MELT instruments into their(hopefully) proper position and RAISE them out of the mix in the same fashion. It really helps to make 'Freq.' VS. 'Amplitude' decisions like "Is it the Midrange of that Guitar that's stomping on the Lead Vox in the Chorus?" TwistTwistTwist.... Or is it the "Yowl" (800-1.2k) in the SVT rig? TwistTwistTwist.... Anyhoo. Along with about 3 zillion things other I seem to enjoy doing on a Large frame analog Tactile Surface... It ain't gonna happen here anytime soon in the fucking DAW.

On the other hand, just to play the Devils Advocate.... there are SCADS of things that using the DAW as an 'Intelligent Tape Machine' in mix allows me to do.... Some are the obvious shit that clearly separates Digital from Analog sound manipulation in terms of speed and efficiency... We all know about that shit.... Others are LESS obvious shit that involves setting up MANY previously IMPOSSIBLE or at least IMPRACTICAL "chains" of audio information, that help you ATTAIN and MAINTAN "Maximum user power and flexibility" AS you PROGRESS THRU mixing a record. This is where the REAL POWER of the DAW lies for me personally... I'll get back into

it later... But let's get back to this fucking fiasco before I die of old age...

OK. Like an asshole... I'm gonna start with the Kick Drum.

Now I don't know SHIT at this point about WHAT I'm REALLY GONNA NEED from the Kick yet.... I don't even fucking CARE yet really... I just need to know WHAT I GOT.... AND WHERE I CAN DRIVE IT.

Check it: WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE NOW and WHAT I CAN MAKE IT SOUND LIKE without wasting a whole lotta fucking time.

I want to find the shit that makes it HAPPEN and see if I can make it HAPPEN MORE there, and find the shit that makes it SUCK, and see if I can make it SUCK LESS. The whole time remembering.... Some shit that appears to make it SUCK in solo.... May SAVE MY ASS in the 'Big Picture'. That's why this shit is a fucking art baby. Not JUST a fucking science... And I wouldn't fucking bother to do it if I didn't believe that... I'd find something easier to do... Like maybe... Climb K2 in a wedding dress. Anyhoo.

HERE WE(Finally) GO.

Back in a jiffy.

SM.

OK. When the "Jaybird"(The tracking guy) cut this drum to tape he made a bunch of choices which are either gonna move in SYMPATHY with what I think I need as a Mix AE, or they're gonna make me hate life and want to kill him.... Let's see what we got...

First thing I'm trying to find out as I shift the Logic channel Eq. around on this thing, is where the obvious areas of POWER in the instrument lie.

We'll use this exercise in futility to talk a bit about the Logic Channel Eq., how it works and what we can do with it.... We won't even get into the very common and vital assessments of WHETHER it's the RIGHT Eq. to be using on this drum... We go there and we'll be here all fucking year. [You may recall I made the same decision regarding just sticking to using a single SM57 to mic guitars in the first thread] My hope is.... If we reduce the 'range of choices/possibilities, we can focus more on the TECHNIQUES and less on the TOOLS... A scenario that often proves rather more difficult to avoid in professional life.

The Logic6 Channel Eq. is a 6-band + Hi and LoPass filter thingy that offers quite a few creative/corrective options for a 'resident' plug in.... I'm gonna start by ignoring the 2 shelf EQ's(Which appear as the lowest and highest bands with the 4 fully parametric bands between them) for starters. I'm going to concentrate instead on seeing if I can use just the 4 middle parametrics and the Hi/LoPass for my "Fishing/Triage" shit.

First I'll center the Lowest Para around 80Hz. and adjust it's 'q' from it's default of 0.71 to something a little tighter, like say 2.30. On the screen as I boost and cut this shows up as tidy little 'mound' instead of a great big 'hill'. I'll set about 4-5Db. of boost initially and sweep this around looking for the spot where the 'center' of the drum seems to live.... This might be at 55Hz... It might be at 90Hz.... In this case the most dramatic change seems to occur right around the 65hz range. On input... As the Jaybird cut it.... This is where the 'Tonic' of this particular drum appears. Easy enough. I'll leave that band right where it is and proceed to drag it's amount of boost or cut up and down for a second to see the 'range of workability' with this drum, GIVEN that NO OTHER CHANGES were to be made to this particular EQ.

Once again... I don't know, nor do I fucking CARE at this juncture, if this is going to be a frequency I'm gonna be boosting or cutting in the long run.... I'm just finding a specific band of information that 'Jumps out' of the sound of the instrument when I fuck with it... In this case, I'll make a mental note that this is probably a USEFUL PREPONDERANT freq. in this drum, which could potentially be used to my advantage "in the fray".

Mixing is rarely about "Set and Forget". It's usually much more about "Set and DON'T Forget"

Now at this point I might also wanna adjust the bandwidth of the 'q' while adjusting the amount of cut/boost and see how 'Narrow or Wide' a range of frequencies my little 'Thump' band seems to effective in... And I'll ALSO endeavor to listen to WHAT ELSE comes in to and out of the picture as I make these adjustments.....

DON'T GET FREAKY WITH THIS.... Toggle around fer a minnit and see if there's anything else that initially appears to be either useful or annoying, DIRECTLY adjacent to the Freq. you have selected.

In this case, I'm finding that I can get a boost of about 8Db out of the drum @ 65Hz with a 'q' of 2.90(moderately narrow) before it sounds like I'm 'reinventing' the drum.

Don't need to do that!

Not yet!

HOHOHO.

Now I'll toggle the band in/out switch on the Eq. once or twice to hear my 'before and after', and see if this changes my perspective/gut instinct regarding the appropriateness of my choices...

Nope... Still sounds like the same drum basically... It just has a whole lot more 'Thump' in it.

Fine... Food for thought... Let's move on.

OK. As I was fucking with the controls on that first adjustment I noticed something... When the 'q' went wider, a bunch of ADDITIONAL bullshit started to show up to the party that wasn't necessarily gonna play nicely with our little 'mound' @65. It didn't seem to be BELOW our 'sweet spot'... It seemed to appear ABOVE IT....

In furtherance of this minor discovery, I took the liberty of sweeping the original mid-narrow 'q' I had centered @ 65 up to the 125-140 range to see what the fuck was up there....

Ah-Ha!!! In this range I found a smaller, but still appreciable, preponderance of energy at about 130Hz.....

Hmmm..... 65Hz..... 130Hz.....

$65 \times 2 = ????$

Guess what Boatly?

We just found our "SuperTonic"... That's right.... We just found a second hump in our signal at EXACTLY DOUBLE the range where the first hump was centered.

Who woulda thunk?

Spank my ass and call me Sally.

Welcome to MusiMatics.

The dangerous, largely unmarked and poorly lit intersection of Art and Science. Don't mind the mangled bodies and twisted wreckage.

This is where yer gonna spend the rest of your career.... if yer lucky(?).

One thing is certain....

This is yer fucking job. The NUMBERS behind the sound. Understanding them and then learning how to UTTERLY DISMISS them... if, and as, needed in the pursuit of the SONG... Of the ART.

Cool! Fine! Lets roll our second band of Para down to this range and start fishing ALL OVER AGAIN.... Now let's try the same cycle of movements with an eye towards CUTTING.... Not that you'll definitely be CUTTING these frequencies. in the future... Just call it a hunch. More importantly... Let's see how cutting and boosting in this range affects our PERCEPTION of the changes we already made in our sound.

OK. I'm afraid I might lose this little mess here to the 'great internet vortex' (Hey! I'm working on a Mac here!! HOHOHO) and so I'm gonna post this, edit it for a minnit or two, stretch my legs, rest my ass (which is fucking killing me from the reception desk chair), get another coffee and BRB.

I already had a second cigar so I'm shit outta luck on that front.

2 a day is the absolute limit. HOHOHO.

Riiiiiiight.

Where dat fucking humidior git to?

SM.

Well... It's four fucking hours of typing later and I've managed to get a wholly confusing explanation of how to get one band of Eq. adjusted on one track....

LMFBO.

This is SOOOOO Fucking nuts.

I have gotta be the only knave stupid enough in the history of AE to actually try this....

Headlines read: "SLIPPERMAN = DUMBEST ASSHOLE EVER"

My claim to fame....

Might as well go with it....

They sure as fuck ain't ever gonna read...

"SLIPPERMAN ACES MIX - CLIENTS LEAVE PLEASED AS PUNCH"

HOHOHO.

There's something both hysterically funny, and totally great, about SUCKING at something, and REFUSING to GIVE UP....

It REALLY IRRITATES THE FUCK OUTTA SOME PEOPLE.... HAHAAAAHA.

Ahh me... Yes...

Where were we...?

Oh Yes.... The "SuperTonic" on de DrumAGogus-Kickus.

So....

As we start to fuck around with this second band at 130Hz(While leaving the original +6 boost intact @ 65Hz), we start to notice some things....

Using a 'q' about the same width as our 65Hz boost @ 130 and cutting about the same amount from the 'supertonic' that we are adding to the 'tonic'... The cut acts almost like a 'sustain' control on our original boost...

That is: By careful adjustment of the 'q', cut and frequency controls on this second band, we can KEEP our 'thump' and create the illusion that we are lengthening and shortening the DURATION of the drum with the Eq. We can use this 'adjacent band' activity to KEEP our POWER and reduce the "Beach Ball" effect that our big boost has created in the kick.

Might wanna select a conservative setting for this band of Eq. and move on. An OCCURRENCE OF PREPONDERANT ENERGY(POTENIALLY EARMARKED FOR REDUCTION) HAS BEEN

IDENTIFIED AND MUST BE DULY NOTED.....

Once again.... We don't know... We may end up fucking boosting that shit... We'll find out later...
Right now we just wanna SET AND NOT FORGET.

Starting to see a trend here?

Ahh me.. Will the fun never cease?

OK. Band 3 of the Kick Eq.

Start with the same drill....

Might wanna look at the 270Hz range..... HOHOHO.

We could go on forever here... And I won't... Not tonight...

Let's just say this...

After a few minutes of fucking around, here's what I ended up with:

<http://marsh.prosoundweb.com/index.php/fa/854/0/>

Well.... I'm toast.

Gotta flee.

See ya tomorrow for more futility.

XOXOXOX

SM.

OK. I'm back.

I'm am indeed getting ill.... as is wont to happen when ya get sleep deprived for a coupla weeks in a row.

Ahh me...

Anyhoo.

I'm probably not gonna stay on long here tonight.

But, here's where I ended up with my Kick Eq. as a "Moving on" setting.



In other words... This WHOLE long and drawn out process would have probably taken me about 3-5 minutes to accomplish before I went "Yah, right... whatever..." and moved on to the next series of tasks.

In the end, as I went thru the motions, I tried to find the POWER and the PAIN in the drum and "ID" them with my Eq. settings, more than ever thinking I was ACTUALLY moving toward a true "mix decision".

JUST STIRRING THE POT.

We've just begun to STIR THE POT.

As we "Stir the pot" we're gonna "Set and DON'T forget" stuff and make mental notes of the various considerations that will probably affect us further down the line.

Remember, this is a "Fishing/Triage" Expedition. It's HOW we've chosen to begin working on this particular mix as an organizational methodology.

And IMNTLBFHO, a HUGE part of mix is ORGANIZATIONAL in nature.

HUGE PART.

So...

As I'm working on this Kick, I noted some stuff.

First: "Post rip" That is... AFTER I started to work the Eq. of the track, some things about it's basic tracking were revealed...

This is the way the cookie crumbles MOST of the time...

That is... AS you start to fuck with stuff... NEW TRUTHS about the nature of the recorded track start to rear their(usually ugly) head.

In this case... As I made the deep cut in the midrange that you saw on the first posted Eq.(As opposed to the second "Let's move on... Eq.), I noted that some of the 'fronts', that is THE ATTACK PORTION of the Kick drum were a tiny bit 'Late' or at least 'sudden'... This is because an analog gate has gotta "See" something to "Do" something and the TIME it takes to "DO SOMETHING" is often enough to clip the very first revolution of the wave... Back in the day, various analog gate Mfg. went thru holy hell in a hand-basket trying to get the 'fastest' gate response time for exactly this reason. The DBX172 "Super gate" even featured a little analog version of the "look ahead" technology that is available in most DAW gates you see these days... Unfortunately the 172 was about the WORST SOUNDING GATE EVER (Not really, but it was pretty fucking BAD) in my opinion and it wasn't worth the 'look ahead' TRICK considering that half the fucking signal went the way of the fucking buffalo when you used them... Terrible sounding... Just Terrible. Hence my amused comment in the earlier post about the dreaded Behringer "Intelligate" being used. It stemmed, in part, from my observations that although the Behringer was a \$200 piece of shit... It actually SOUNDED about 6 zillion times as good (regarding the actual QUALITY OF SIGNAL PASSED) as it's much more costly DBX counterpart. Hilariously (kinda), the other gate available to Jaybird, in the room he was working in at the time, was the Drawmer DS201, a gate which SOUNDS OK, but is actually much harder to control around the "chatter point" (Threshold) on kick drums than the Behringer, by virtue of it's 'side chain filter' design.

The USE of analog gates on input, for recording drums, is not something I would normally advise an AE to tackle, something I can't REMEMBER seeing Jaybird do in ANY of the many various sessions I've received from him over the years, and something that had me chuckling in wonderment/disbelief when I looked at the track sheet to begin working...

I'm still laughing... Thank Christ.

In fact, what the Jaybird gave me is actually a remarkably effective usage of the technology, for the time period it was performed in, accomplished by an experienced tracking AE... And he PRETTY MUCH GOT AWAY WITH IT. Which is more than I can say for about 99% of the recordings utilizing that approach from that era. HOHO-somebuddi-hurt-me-HO.

Anyhoo. THESE days there is really NO reason I can think of(off the top of me noggin') for analog gating of drums on input (Unless yer doing 2x live or some shit like that...) in DAW based recording and/or playback. As all the various functions of the gate can be replicated AFTER the fact with MUCH more powerful and concise tools that DON'T FORCE YOU TO COMMIT TO THE APPROACH AND THE YIELD OF THE APPROACH.

We're gonna take a look at some of those tools and how we might use them to our advantage, sooner rather than later.

We're also gonna talk about a few additional problems/potential solutions with the Kick track "post-rip".

OK. I'm gonna take a brief break. Rest my fat ass.... Which is killing me from this fucking chair, and get back here for as long as I can muster.

Here's that amended "Moving on" kick were gonna "Set and NOT forget"...

SM.

OK. Here is a section of the songs 'Raw' Kick drum track, which includes 1/2 of 'riff' vamp, an entire verse and a full chorus. 24 bars @112bpm. It's a lot but I need all 3 sections to facilitate this evenings demonstrations. It is a 128k Mpeg, which has been POW-R, dithered down from the original 24bit/48k dupe off the original analog reels.

Raw Kick Drum as Mp3 (823.5k)

It acts as a great starting spot to discuss a myriad of issues regarding how we might wish to initially approach "quick and dirty" treatment of this track as we continue to "stir the pot"...

As we scope this out we can hear a bunch of fairly interesting things going on... First, this is a Sony C-48 LDC in 'figure-of-eight' pattern. It's got a bit of 'paper' in it from the front head. That's cool.... It's what it is...

OK. We can also hear that the original analog gate is NOT set for TOTAL closure(That is... closure to APPARENT silence) between hits...

I said earlier that it sounded like he was knocking 6-8 Db. off the signal as far as total track attenuation...

On closer inspection I'd say it's more like 12-15Db.

Anyhoo. No big.

Here's some important stuff we can note when we listen to this track.

First off.. We DO have at least one instance where the gate does not REALLY open all the way near the beginning of the clip... It's at measure #1, on the 3-and(I think...?) , That little double is 'kinda' missing it's FIRST stroke.... The gate just 'pips'...

Ahh me... Not the end of the world... BUT... we're gonna make a mental note of this kinda activity and file it away with all the other shit as we move forward...

We're looking for TRENDS here people... TRENDS in the recording methods.

TRENDS in the playing style.

TRENDS in the INTERSECTION of the RECORDING METHOD AND THE PLAYING STYLE....

AND THOSE ARE THE KILLA!!!

Those 'relationships' are what we're REALLY most concerned with... Because those relationships DICTATE what's possible in the various methods we MIGHT employ on this track... AND MOST IMPORTANTLY... POINT us TOWARD what methods we WANNA employ on this track in this mix.

It's WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT WE GOT(In any particular performance/capture method) AND WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE TOOLS WE CAN CHOOSE FOR THE SPECIFIC TASKS THAT SAVES OR SINKS US!

OK. Also of note... this kids a 'Beater Bouncer'...

Hear that?

A bunch of his shots are actually a tiny 'flam', as the beater impacts the head... bounces... and returns to it's 'buried' position.... This shit will sometimes wreak HAVOC with your mind/mix depending on HOW MUCH and HOW LOUDLY the kid 'buries' the beater.

It's also Dependent upon WHERE the kid buries the beater...

If ya listen carefully you can hear that as drummer plays the various sections, he also uses the "Bury the beater" stuff to add EMPHASIS to different strokes... It's not just a 'side effect' of his playing technique... It's PART of how he TRIES to add impact and excitement to the various sections....

Now we gotta listen to how the gate (Which is already 'cast in stone') has RESPONDED to those performance nuances....

Ahh Ha!... On a lotta the 'buried' shots the gate appears to close A LOT quicker than on the shots where he retracts the beater from the head. This is ACCENTUATING the 'activity' of the player with a 'monkey-see-monkey-do' activity from the gate.

Maybe a good thing? Maybe not... Another mental note moment here.

Fine. Before we move on to the EQ'd Kick, we'll also just note that there is a certain 'character' to the recorded track that cleanly denotes this is a CONDENSER MIC recording that is grabbing it's sound from 2 different heads... The gate is undoubtedly REDUCING the appearance of this phenomenon, but it's worth noting nonetheless.

As with everything else in mix... The ability to decide what is worthwhile/important (from BOTH a technical and performance standpoint...) and what is troublesome/problematic, is key to managing the unavoidable and wholly necessary cycles of (hopefully) prudent assessment and reassessment that eventually power the cogent engine of refinement.

In other words... Think about the shit yer hearing, and WHY yer hearing it... and make PLENTY of mental notes as you stir the fucking pot.

OK. You guys know the drill.

Coffee and Cigar.

Rest fat ass.

Back with the EQ'd kick.

BRB.

SM.

OK. Here's the EQ'd "Work in progress" Kick drum.

EQ'd Kick Drum as Mp3 (821k)

You have a graphic depiction of the changes I made in an earlier post.

I'm gonna go over WHY I made them briefly.

Briefly. RIGGGHHHTTTTTT.

LMFBO. Ahh me.

OK. So obviously I went after the midrange of the drum like a madman.

Here's why.

Quite a while ago, for reasons I'm not gonna get into here (and there's a bit of contentious debate about anyway...) a whole big bunch of audio engineers decided that the midrange of a kick drum was NOT a beautiful thing. They started hacking and chopping away at it like it was the spawn of Satan. They made a SHITLOAD of records across all kinda genres, and persisted in this line of thinking for so many years that they basically REINVENTED the popular sonic expectation (at least among musicians and AE's) of the instrument.

The 'Ripped-Mid' kick drum became a STAPLE of MIX FASHION that has persisted (Like the trousers vs. say... a kilt) for SO LONG in modern mix topology, that one is in GRAVE DANGER of being considered a FECKLESS KNAVE should one decide to BUCK THE TREND.

HOHO-How-fucking-sad-is-that?-HO.

There are MANY other examples of similarly hilariously sad/strange (and often UTTERLY baffling) MIX FASHION trends... Some of which COME AND GO (once again for a myriad of reasons that any group of more than 10 assembled AE's will get in a fistfight about at the drop of a fucking hat) and SOME, which appear to be (for better or worse) HERE FOR-FUCKING-EVER.

Like the "NO-FUCKING-MID" Kick Drum.

Here's the funny thing about the "No-Mid" Kick drum.

See. EVERYBODY knows that a Kick drum (Live in a room... Just using yer ears...) has a SHITLOAD of Midrange frequencies in many (really MOST) cases.... I mean... you can do quite a bit to attenuate these frequencies by use of dampening and tuning but... Overall... A kick in a room has a WHOLE FUCKING BUNCH of mids.

We ALSO know that a kick drum, due to the nature of it's basic construction... that being: at least 1, and commonly 2, large diameter membranes (In the 'double-headed variety appearing about 14-20 inches APART from each other) usually between 20"-24" in diameter produces LOW END.

That is to say... Dependent upon tuning and a whole bunch of other bullshit... It has a "Tonic" that commonly ranges between say.... 50 and 100Hz.

It ALSO (Since the invention of the kick drum pedal by W.F. Ludwig about a century ago) has a 'Beater-smack' component in it's sound, that can vary WILDLY in it's perceived spectral appearance (also Dependent upon a BEWILDERING NUMBER OF VARIABLES - THAT WE JUST AIN'T GONNA GO INTO HERE), but most folks find it's 'point' to range between say... 2KHz and 4KHz.... Now it's ALSO got all kinza "harmonic partials" that range ALL the way up outta the "Human Audibility range". In fact, the funny thing about SOUND is... And I can't STRESS THIS ENOUGH...

EVERYTHING AFFECTS EVERYTHING....

Which is WHY BANDWIDTH MATTERS.

But hey!

I'll leave that discussion for those rocket scientist muthafuckers over at George Massenburgs forum.

In any event...

HOW MUCH EVERYTHING AFFECTS EVERYTHING seems to be the whole big object of contention amongst folks in every audio related endeavor these days, and the practical, mathematical, logistical and artistic considerations attached to that statement are a big part of your job as a SECONDARY SOUND TRANSDUCTION ARTIST.

WARNING AND DISCLAIMER: I will indubitably be pounding on THAT little concept (Secondary Sound Transduction Artist) like a fucking madman throughout this entire thread. So if the thought that an AE could be an 'artist' every bit as much as the guys we commonly refer to as musicians, turns yer stomach, and makes you want to run screaming thru the streets shooting people (Like me... fer instance)... YA MIGHT WANNA CONSIDER SPRINTING THE FUCK AWAY, RIGHT NOW, BEFORE I GET MEDIEVAL ON YER ASS (stolen line)!

Or not.

How about if we just drop that little tack and NEVER RETURN to it?

We might actually get past the "First look" at the Kick drum.

LMFBO.

I'll be good..

I promise.

Sorry.

AnyHowitzer.

So... Some morons decided a while back, in their mad and desperate quest for "MORE ROOM IN THE MIDRANGE FOR THE IMPORTANT STUFF", that they were going to sacrifice the kick drums' mids on the alter of the vocal and guitar Gods and DO AWAY WITH THAT PESKY SHIT FOREVER.

Great.

Fuck it.

"Can't beat 'em join 'em", I always say.

Who cares that the midrange, WHICH IS THE MAIN COMPONENT IN THE KICK DRUMS ABILITY TO EXPRESS ITSELF, as both a function of nuance and impact for the drummer, is turned into the sonic equivalent of a BOWLING BALL?

A BIG HEAVY GRACELESS HARD THING.

Kinda what I wish my penis was....

HAHAHAHAHAHA..... Oh God... I GOTTA get some fucking sleep.

OK.

Anyhoo. If yer ever interested in the subject, start listening to some old records from the 60-70's, and yer gonna hear what I'm talking about in one fucking second... A drummer used to have a MUCH greater range of IMPACT over the dynamics of the music when his foot could actually CONVEY something besides... THUMP/THWACK.

I shit you not. It's fucking scary what people will take away from ya if ya let them.

[Kick drum rant over... Thank God].

But... The damage is done. My girlfriend lives in Australia. Trips over there cost a lotta money. I gotta have sex at least ONCE OR TWICE a year, and that's WHY I'M RIPPING THE FUCKING SHIT OUTTA THE MIDS ON THIS FUCKING KIK. So somebody will think I know what I'm doing, pay me, and I can fly 12,000 miles to get laid.

I'm a regular Einstein huh?

So we boosted some shit around 50-60Hz so we could go....

YEAHHHHHHH! LOW END!!!!

WHOOOEEEEEE.

WE ROCK!!!

WE RULE!!!

WE'RE MAKING SHIT BIG!!!!

Then we found out if we cut some shit at around 130 we could actually INCREASE the perception of power in the "Tonic" by killing it's next-door neighbor.

Then we went after those rotten touchy feely hippy assholes in the midrange, for all the stupid reasons I've been ranting and raving about...

Then we found out we really already HAD a decent amount of top end on the drum... But with all those smarmy, pinko-fag, commie mids gone.... It sounded kinda wispy and 'vapid' way up in the 9k+ range.....

So we RUTHLESSLY low-passed all that shit into oblivion BECAUSE.....

WE STILL DON'T HAVE THE FOGGIEST IDEA OF WHAT THE FUCK WE'RE GONNA NEED THE DRUM TO DO IN MIX.

And all in all... we probably spent about 5 minutes doing what has taken me about 5 hours to explain.

Marvelous.

Guess what?

We're just getting started on this instrument!

That's right. Yes indeedy.

I'm still fishing on the fucking Kick drum.

Why?

Because I've only spent a few minutes on it and I still need to find out more shit about it.... Including: Whether or not I'm EVEN GONNA USE IT.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA.

Told ya I change my mind like a madman.

We may end up sample replacing this fucking kick.

I dunno.... But I'm gonna find out.

When I come back, probably NOT till Monday (I got a shitload of work I'm playing hooky on...) We're gonna look at our first shot at a "Quick and dirty" gate...

WHY?

Why you say... ?????

"WHY CAN'T WE MOVE ON Slipperman?

We're SICK TO DEATH OF THE FUCKING KICK DRUM!!"

'Cause I wanna see what's possible with that fiasco and explain some common stuff that goes down with DAW gating...

AND THEN....

We're gonna look at a "SUPER quick and dirty" compressor setup as well....

For exactly the same reasons...

Because it takes 2 seconds,

And we wanna know what the fuck is up with this track ASAP,

And I'd like to explain some common stuff that goes on in those(Compression) undertakings.

So we can blow it all off and run an ESX24 virtual sampler in place of this whole fucking miserable track.

Or not.

Tough tittie.

Bless yer pointy heads.

Every one.

SM.

Another day from hell...

It's 3am and I'm just getting free to do this shit.

Ok. I'll see if I can post anything useful before I collapse.

Here's a look at the Logic gate I set up for my Kick drum.



Hardly a laboriously researched undertaking here....

Let's take a look at the controls, talk about the settings, and I'll attempt to explain what I'm trying to accomplish here by even bothering with this thing.

OK. As far as yer typical DAW user would be concerned, digital noise gates function just like their analog counterparts with a few clever and often helpful additional wrinkles.

First, because I'm a torturous bastard, I'm gonna bore ya with a little vague and probably marginally inaccurate history lesson.

Note for now and the remainder of this God-Forsaken thread

{Any 'old guys' (or otherwise) who give a flying fuck, are always welcome to revise, amend, append and correct this shit... 'cause half of it is foggy memories.... and the other half is "bulkhead scuttlebutt" (as my Pop the Navy guy would say)... In other words... Shit I have heard from fucking around like a moron in studios for the past quarter of a century. That is... I'll try to convey the general idea. Anybody wants to butt in and fix my shit up... Knock yerself out.}

Anyhosier.

Back in the early seventies, a bunch of silly freaks in Nashville(?) had a company called 'Allison Research'. These cats were really interested in a then relatively new electronic audio processing device (An IC chip) called the 'VCA'.

VCA being an acronym standing for 'Voltage Controlled Amplifier'.

The VCA was basically a gremlin with a fader.

That's right. You had this little gremlin in a chip and you could tell him to do various shit with his fader... and(theoretically) he would follow your orders to the letter.

Well kinda.....

You could give this little guy a set of 'conditions' and he would whip the fader around in accordance to HOW the audio intersected with this little "Command set" you had specified.

Now some folks wanted the gremlin to do ONE set of tasks, and other folks were a lot more concerned with getting the gremlin to do ANOTHER set of tasks.... And before anybody knew what hit 'em.... Motherfuckers were swarming outta the woodwork trying to get the gremlin to perform all kinza strange and wonderful tasks that had been pretty much STOMP DOWN IMPOSSIBLE before he was invented.

The 'Noise Gate' was one of those tasks.

In audio circuit paths.... "Anything audible or measurable which is not signal is noise" At least that was the old saw.

So folks started gettin' a hankerin' fer OBLITERATING (or at least beating the fuck outta) shit like.... Hum, hiss, RF, NVA propaganda broadcasts, snare drum bleed in the kick drum track...

All kinza shit that was making us lose the war in 'Nam.

Yep, It was a military thing.

Ain't it always?

No. It was not a military thing.

That was an outright falsehood.

Or maybe it was....? I dunno.

Somebody was probably bucking to drop the hiBand RF chatter from the FOF rig at the Da Nang Radar command.

"Whip a Kepex on that noise floor corporal!!! And get me a H&I HE sequence with a WhitePhoz chaser on the tree line..... like yesterday!!!!"

Right.

The gate.

We're gating a kick drum.

So if ya look at my gate setting yer gonna see a few things.

Leftmost the "threshold".

This is the point, in terms of amplitude, that compels the gremlin to pick up the phone and let somebody talk. Until the signal exceeds this size, he just keeps on watching TV and eating his Cheetos.

Reduction: This is the AMOUNT of gain reduction the gremlin is gonna apply to our signal UNTIL he answers the phone, and the point he will RETURN the fader to... AFTER he hangs it up again.

So once again...

In this example our gremlin has decided to LEAVE the fader down -22Db from 'unity' (0dB on the fader, in this case).... the phone rings and rings like crazy, but he IGNORES IT, until it rings LOUD enough to get him off his fat ass on the couch.

How FAST he whips up the fader up to 0dB (once he's gotten off the couch) is the "Attack time". How fast he whips the fader back down to -22dB is the "Release time". How long he LEAVES the fader at 0Db. (to rest his wrist and pick his ass), is the "Hold Time"

Well, actually... he's not picking his ass... He's smoking a joint.... And he turns into a mindless pothead zombie who doesn't do shit until the joint is finished. HOW LONG it takes him to polish off the joint is the "Hold Time".

BTW.... In a noise gate, it DOES NOT HAFTA be -40db/whip the fader down like a madman/all or nothing scenario (A common assumption/mistake a lotta young AE's make)..... It can be 6-8 dB... Whip the fader down a little bit and reduce the appearance of 'noise' (or whatever yer trying to get rid of) in the big picture.

This is what we saw Jaybird do with his 'Intelligate' on input.

He didn't KILL everything else in the track by gating.... He DIMINISHED the common perception of audibility (on the shit that was bothering him in the track). He did this because the human ear is more adept at hearing things move from signal to SILENCE than it is at hearing them move from signal to 'less signal'. Especially when the signal in question is buried in a morass of OTHER signals.... Like a gated Kick drum in a dense "Heavy Music" mix...

Alright, as we mentioned earlier in the thread, a gate has gotta HEAR something to DO something, so the AMOUNT OF TIME it takes any particular gremlin to get off the couch and answer the phone has always been 'the muthafukka'. Because back in the analog days (excepting the DBX172 Stupor Gate, which not only sounded like shit, but also made yer signal LATE by delaying the signal until the gate could open) the gremlin was ALWAYS late whipping the fader up.....

BECAUSE of the time it took for him to figure out the phone had finally RUNG LOUDLY enough to warrant his attention, and the time it took for him to get off his ass and answer it.

Had ta "HEAR something, to DO something" .. remember?

Ahh but see..... In this binary world of smoke and mirrors we got us now, in dis here futuristic DAW age.... Our gremlin is clairvoyant...

Uh-huh... He's a regular "Nostradamus of Audio".

Our digital gremlin can see into the future and PREDICT WITH TOTAL ACCURACY WHEN THE PHONE IS GONNA RING...

He can "Look Ahead" into the mists of time, by a specified interval, and he can answer the phone AND whip up the fader with ZERO lag time, or even BEFORE the phone is gonna ring.... because he has already gotten off the couch and picked up the phone... BEFORE it rang.

This, obviously, is yer "look ahead" control.

OK. Almost done with this shit.

Last 2 controls are the 'Side chain' controls....

OK. Imagine our gremlin has a special pair of earplugs. these earplugs have filters on them that allow the gremlin to mute out certain parts of the audio spectrum as he sits on the couch watching "Iron Chef" (The only show worth watching on TV beside NHL Hockey, AHL Hockey, CHL Hockey, ECHL Hockey, Roller Hockey, College Hockey, High School Hockey, Street Hockey and even.... in a pinch..... Women's Field Hockey. I know it's a wide variety of interests.... But Hey! Ya gotta expand yer orisons.) So anyhow...

He can set the controls on these earplugs to mute out everything from the infrasonic rumble of Cement trucks ripping by your window at 5am.... to that shitty hi-pitched squealing noise that crappy TV's make, before you throw them (Still plugged in, of course), into the hot-tub where your ex-wife is relaxing with her copy of "The Gold-diggers Guide to acquiring wealth via Subterfuge and Torture"

In short.... These are fairly steep high and low pass filters that allow you to isolate pretty much anything ya might wanna "band pass" in the audio spectra. You "trap" the range ya want the gremlin to listen to in between the 2 bands and the rest of the shit goes the way of the Dodo bird.

Not the SIGNAL YER PASSING mind you.... just the signal the gremlin PAYS ATTENTION to.... hence the term "side chain"....

The monitor button lets you listen to the signal with the gremlins earplugs on, and you can use these controls to further assist the gremlin in answering only the phone calls you want him to answer.

Turn the fucking 'monitor' button OFF, before ya go back to doing other shit, for Chrissake....

Or you WILL be passing the 'side chain' signal.

Whoops... Forgot the "hysterical" control.

This is the control you use to generate a sample of canned laughter from "Gilligan's Island" when you realize that:

- A. The band sucks major cock.
- B. Yer wasting untold hours of your life, that yer gonna want back, when you get out to my ripe age.

and of course...

- C. You begin to contemplate my earlier suggestion to get into a paying line of work instead of remaining an irresponsible teenage n'er-do-well for the rest of your life.

OK. I lied again.

That IS NOT what 'hysteresis' does...

What it DOES is set a different "threshold point"(and in the case of this particular gate's design a *lower only* point) to command the gremlin to whip the fader down AFTER he has brought it up to unity.

Sounds perplexing? ...

It ain't... It's simple.

If ya told the gremlin to "pass signal" by whipping the fader up when anything in the program material (post side chain filters) exceeded -22Db.... Which is what I did here....

You could get him to IGNORE any tiny fluctuations in signal AROUND the threshold point by specifying a DIFFERENT (lower) point in threshold to use as the point he starts whipping the fader DOWN.

One more time....

If yer kick drum breaks the -22 Db. threshold setting, has some little fluctuations in volume that might cause the gate to "chatter" (turn rapidly on and off) near that point, but you, being the clever person you are, have told the gremlin to ignore that shit until the gate sees something lower than 'threshold minus x'...

"x" is the hysteresis...

The DIFFERENCE BETWEEN Thresholds for "gate on" and "gate off".... set by you.

All right. I gotta do some paying work, my electrical bill just came in and it's \$4914.61.

NO... I'm NOT MAKING THAT UP.... It's approx. 2.5k an month for all the AC/Desks/Computers/Sybian machines and I blew them off last month.... HOHOHO... Can't do THAT shit for more than a month with the power company.... Speaking of rackets to get into instead of Audio... OK. I ain't going there again...

Now that I've written another interminable, aimless, confusing encyclopedia on explaining the function of the various noise gate controls... I'll use the next post to explain WHY I set them where I did....

I'll also post the "Gated Kick" sample and move on to my "Quick and dirty/work-in-progress" compressor setting and we can eventually move on to looking at the snare....

HAHAHAHAHA.

This is insanity.

But ya know what....?

I'm a stubborn bastard when I get my mind onto something and I'm on a fucking mission here....

WHAT the mission is.....?

I have NO FUCKING IDEA....

Fun.

The mission is FUN.

Hence the 'teenager for life' thing mentioned earlier in this post.

XOXOXOX

SM.

Right. Back.

OK.

As you know.... Our kick drum is ALREADY gated on input.

This both SOLVES and CREATES some problems.

Problems solved:

- 1.) It appears Jaybird got the vast majority of kick shots cleanly captured, and a lot of the random bullshit we might normally be dealing with, as far as 'bleed' is history.

This means: If we decided to run a 'strip silence' on this bad boy (we'll probably open THAT can of wormies on the snare drum installment, CERTAINLY on the Toms), it's probably gonna be pretty easy for the program to grab all the shit we want (and ignore the stuff we don't want) right off the bat.

- 2.) The 'remaining' Kick track info probably has a slightly exaggerated uniformity in 'wave shape'.... That is to say... the gremlin in the analog gate has already shaped the front (attack) and back (release) ends, and even the duration (decay/hold) of the signal a bit for us already by virtue of WHAT IT DID to the track on input.

This means we got us some UNIFORMITY in this here track that we might not expect from an 'un-gated' recording.

Hilariously. Problem SOLVED #2.... is ALSO POTENTIALLY PROBLEM CREATED #1.

Yep.

I am going to state here and now, something you will see me repeat OVER AND OVER AGAIN in this thread.... Because it CANNOT be stressed enough.

PERFECTION AND UNIFORMITY ARE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE IDEALS.

That's right.

A WHOLE FUCKING LOT OF WHAT HAS GONE HORRIBLY, HORRIBLY WRONG IN AUDIO ENGINEERING IN THE PAST 3 DECADES IS BECAUSE BRAIN DEAD, LIMP DICK MUTHAFUKKAZ CAN'T GET THIS SIMPLE CONCEPT SORTED OUT.

I don't have the time to rant further (Thank God), but I just ask..... BEG... You to consider the statement for a while.

As I stated... We will DECIDEDLY be RETURNING TO THE SUBJECT.

Thank you.

Really.

Don't make me fucking KILL you.

HAHAHAHAHAHA.

OK.

How this 'Impressed Additional Uniformity' will be affecting us and our decisions is something we will get into shortly.

Problems created:

- 1.) Kick is already 'shaped'.... maybe in certain instances, 'misshapen' by the gate on input. The nature of these 'manmade' vs. 'naturally occurring' anomalies may be problematic depending on what we NEED the kick to DO in the mix.
- 2.) We DO have at least one or two instances where the gate simply 'pips' instead of opening cleanly, and we will HAVE to do SOMETHING about those cases. Pain in the ass.

So. I whip my gate on... I leave the attack right @ 0ms.

I can get away with that... I have look ahead... Which I set to 1.0ms.

This effectively gives our gremlin some 'lead time' to make sure we get the attack of the wave.

I drag the reduction down until it's gonna be making a BIG difference... 30-40dB... So it's easier to HEAR the activity of the controls as I work. Once I get the gate operating anywhere NEAR where I'm digging it... I will adjust this to reflect a more conservative amount of reduction, so I can hear the gate 'fall' rather than 'plummet'.

I also might start with a release time of about 100+ ms.... see what I got... I'll leave the 'hold' at zero for now.... I don't fuck with the hysteresis or side chain at all yet.... Just GETTING STARTED....

Now I commence to move the threshold fader up from -100dB until I start to hear the activity of the gate.

In this particular case... I'm really interested in seeing how I can tailor the 'activity' of the work our gremlin is doing, by moving shit around until I have 'reshaped' the signal PASSED in various ways (TO SEE WHAT IS POSSIBLE!!!!... NOT GET A SOUND) and I will make similar 'fishing expeditions' regarding the signal REJECTED.

Once again. We're looking for the RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES on this particular device with THIS PARTICULAR SIGNAL.

So, here's some shit that happens on OUR track as I fuck around...

I find that I can get the gate to take some of the 'beachbally' shit that was kinda "not doing it for me" on the Kick drum post Eq.

It seems that if I fuck with the hold and release times in conjunction with the threshold and reduction sliders... I can 'shorten' the 'walk' outta the drum, to a point where I can kinda tailor it's low end 'power' vs. it's 'top end audibility'.

Oh yeah.... One control that you might not expect to really alter how the hold and release are working is the SIDECHAIN.

That's right...

A lotta guys will START by dropping the side chain down into whatever range gives them the greatest typical 'amplitude response'... In the kick(Especially a 'post-eq.' kick like this guy).... often the 50-100Hz range.

In other words, they use the monitor function of the side chain to find the range where the threshold can be set to it's HIGHEST level, ostensibly for MAXIMUM rejection of unwanted signal... Set it there, and NEVER return to it...

Bad fucking move in many cases.

Here's why.

In a case where you wish to provide MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY and control to the gremlin.... You may have just painted him into a corner.

By selecting the TONIC of the wave to use as the yardstick by which the gremlin judges when to open, and more importantly... WHEN TO CLOSE the gate... You have just selected the MAXIMUM possible duration of the signal to do this with....

In the case of THIS (and most) gates, where you have NO POSITIVE HYSTERESIS VALUE (Yes... This is a design flaw, and a common one...plain and fucking simple), you may get into a situation in which the place you need to go regarding 'duration' of signal is difficult to accomplish

gracefully EVEN WHEN using VERY short hold and release times.... Might wanna consider going after the 'point' of the drum instead, and see if you can have yer cake (accuracy in selection/rejection of passed signal) AND eat it too (Maximum ability to tailor the 'shape' of the passed signal in a fashion that sounds pleasing and 'natural' to you).

In this case, after about 6 nanoseconds of fucking around with the gate hearing the 'tonic' of the drum..... And hearing the response of the plug-in with the low end 'keying' the gremlin.... I went after the 'point' range of the kick, for exactly the above stated reasons.

In the end.... It gave me WAY more control over, and better "perceived sonic performance" in, how the other controls WORKED and SOUNDED.

This is yer job. Some of it anyway....

Figure out how all these tools work under a myriad of conditions and circumstances.

Remember who does what... when and why.

And use it to MAKE AUDIO YER BITCH.

As a God on earth baby.....

A God on fucking earth.

SUBJUGATE THE FUCKING MIX.

Because you can.....

And if you wanna go the 'Documentary'.... 'Recordist'..... 'It's ALL about the 'Primary Sound Transduction guys' route....

You can always do that.

Good luck doing that.... BTW.

In ROCK MUSIC.

ROCK MUSIC.

ROCK MUSIC.

I can count on one hand the amount of clients I've had over the years who REALLY WANTED me to hand them a 'Documentary style rendering' of their efforts....

Oh sure...

Some of them SAY that....

For a myriad of reasons, I ain't EVEN going into now...

But most of these same freaks will GROVEL ON THE GROUND KISSING YER SANDALS if ya make them "Indiana Jones and the Temple of WhaddaYaCallit"

And repeatedly jab sharp objects into tiny dolls that look JUST like you/sport a coupla locks of your hair, if go the other route.

So whatcha do is....

TELL them that you "AIN'T DOING MUCH AT ALL" to their shit...

Then.

GO FUCKING HOGWILD...

Learn to throw up a ZILLION layers of smoke and fucking mirrors so it's PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE to tell WHAT the fuck is going on.....

What is real and what is TOTAL "AFTER THE FACT" tom-foolery....(Yer specialty).

And create the ILLUSION that these fruitcake ACTUALLY know how to play their fucking shit, and all you did, is JUST PUSH PLAY.

No, I am not referring to that MISERABLE Aerosmith record.

That album should have been called....

JUST FUCKING RETIRE.

Anyhoo.

Ahh me...

It appears I am completely INCAPABLE of doing ANYTHING without a fucking rant.

Tough shit.

Until somebody starts paying me for this shit... I'm gonna fucking rant.

Deal with it.

Or flee.

HOHOHO.

Sorry.

Mindloss.

OK.

So here's my glorious "Just fucking around, we'll see that develops" gated kick drum.

EQ'd + Gated Kick Drum as Mp3 (819.5k)

No,

I am not doing the fucking compressor tonight.

I've already totally fucked myself outta the chance to get the 'mix frame' completed in 'A' before the "Producer(AHHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA)" strolls in tomorrow and I hafta put his ass on ice in the client lounge, while I lose my fucking mind creating those endless layers of "Smoke and mirrors" I spoke of earlier.

In the end...

It's best if EVERYBODY leaves CONVINCED that they are A GENIUS.

World full of fucking geniuses.

See ya tomorrow, unless things go EVEN WORSE than expected for me.

SM

Had a thought today working on one of two different mixes that I'm framing in 2 different rooms. These to (hopefully) be completed in my absence (Trip to Oz.)

I don't usually employ digital gates in mixes much, and I decided to do it for shits and giggles and as a quick demonstration for one of the assistants today during the course of festivities.

I'm a fucking idiot.

Ya might wanna examine the 'look ahead' time a little more carefully, if yer using digital gates like these ones...

VERY easy to take the 'front' RIGHT THE FUCK off the wave.

Which I'll bet... if anybody checks that last miserable mpg I posted... is exactly what I did....

I dunno, maybe somebuddi will be bored enough to whip it into a sample editor and tell me if the front end of the wave appears to be intact...

I'll bet I clipped the fuck outta it.

Probably looking at more like 3-6ms. common for 'look ahead time' on these puppy's...

OK.

Too busy wrapping shit up to post anymore shit tonight or tomorrow.

Day from hell.

Fiasco in "A" with dropping in a 'mix frame' for a producer buddy of mine... who is graciously "Playing Engineer" for me for a few days on a mix for ANOTHER producer.

This is going to go down with MY assistant, who is like a deer in the fucking headlights when he's gotta work with ANYBODY else but me. Probably because he's been doing shit EXACTLY SO for 3 friggin' years and he is like a fucking clairvoyant robot from hell... BUT ONLY when it comes to the way I DO shit... Otherwise... he's fucking USELESS.... HAHAAHAHAHA.

Kidding. Kidding.

Kinda. Should be a fucking bloodbath.

Anyhoo.

Hilariously, my senior staff, which is always ragging me for more fucking hours, have apparently decided to ALL go on vacation/tours/killing sprees/whatever... JUST as the shit hits the fan as far as work density.

So it's time for the younger guys to "Step up"... Which historically, they are usually very eager to do, but is also usually a VERY carefully scrutinized process (especially in mix) with paying clients. So I gotta wildly sprint around the building and frame up a bunch of shit on the various desks to (theoretically) avoid any 'boot-recruit' shit as far as the next 2 weeks worth of work...

which also includes 3 new records as "start-ups". One tomorrow.

And as if this idiocy wasn't enough....

Compounding this clusterfuck is the sad fact that the current crop of 'summer' interns (who ACTUALLY have had audio related tasks/concepts BEATEN into them 24/7 while they are here... and are UTTERLY RELIED UPON to perform a myriad of 'support tasks' - like editing and various DAW related bullshit).... Are now going BACK to school to be replaced by a passel of ABSOLUTELY IGNORANT AS ALL FUCKING GIT-OUT interns... Most of whom have just graduated from the various schools summer programs and, of course, are ready to "collect their Grammy's"

That is... "IF you old guys will just step outta the way and let them show you how it's fucking done.... here in the MODERN AGE..."

RIIIIGGGGGHHHHHTTTTTT.....

As it says in tiny letters on my forehead in my new 'Rasputin style' avatar.

KILL ME.

Which is what the studio manager is indubitably going to be saying to himself around the clock....

But....

Fuck em'....

I'm outta here.

So.... I'm gonna load this little mess we're working on here into the 'Titanium shitbox' with the little e-magic interface thingy and the Grado's.... and see if I can't sneak some posts from Oz. without getting my already hideously dinged-up hoo-hoo hacked off by my chick...

We'll see how it goes.

XOXOXOXOXOXOXOX

SM.

Right then.

Here we go.

OK. We're gonna whip a little 'test' compression on the kick, just to get it to 'sit down' in our mix frame while we're working here. We'll employ the dreaded Logic compressor for practical purposes.

In cases involving the tandem use of compression, EQ and gating on various members of the modern 'traps' drum kit. It is quite common to see the compressor employed BEFORE the EQ and AFTER the gate. The folklore wisdom behind this arrangement has its roots in both the practical and functional aspects of the craft.

The "Rule of thumb" theory behind this shit might go something like this.

On yer regular "nothing cut to tape" kick drum sound, the things you might tend to identify as 'areas of power' or 'areas of preponderant energy', both pleasing and displeasing, and one's attempts to amend, append or remedy these phenomenon's via Equalization and compression, will undoubtedly have some effect (and often a detrimental - or at the very least - a TIME CONSUMING one) on the 'behavior' of the noise gate should it appear 'downstream'.

Simply put...If ya put the EQ And Compressor BEFORE the gate, When ya go about fucking around with the settings on the EQ And compressor, ya hafta keep adjusting and re-adjusting the controls of the noise gate, driving you berserk, and wasting a whole lotta yer time chasing silly shit around like an dumb asshole.

I mean, the 'upstream/downstream' thing is gonna apply, no matter HOW ya chain shit. But in the case of a 'Gate last' scenario, it's ESPECIALLY annoying and time consuming/wasting due to the NATURE of what the gate 'does' as an audio device.

OK. Tirade time.

Fuck you. I'm not on the clock.

Getting to do the 'Tirade' thing is HOW I get paid here as far as I'm concerned.

An ENORMOUS AMOUNT of what separates the men from the boys in AE is the ABILITY TO ORGANIZE.

It's like...

EVERYTHING...

Well.. OK.. Not EVERYTHING.. But a LOTTA things.

Here's the deal.

Dude.

Yer a 'DECISION MAKER'... That's whatcha fucking DO for a living.

Ya make decisions.

Thousands and thousands of big and little, apparent, and not so apparent ones, in every mix.

And when ya DON'T make a decision?

Ya STILL made a decision.

'Cause you made a decision 'Not to decide'...

Which will STILL affects the outcome of what yer doing.

Just like any other decision.

Crazy huh?

What's that you say...?

"No Slippy, it's not "crazy"... It's fucking boring, and obvious, can we please get back to the fucking Kick compressor, and then eventually the mix, and then eventually (hopefully), the fucking problem with distorted guitars?

No.

No, we cannot.

Not yet.

Because, in my warped mind, these aimless tirades are some of the most important stuff I can lay on you assholes in the course of this fucking interminable lemming bivouac. The rest of this shit you can buy the YAMAHA SOUND REINFORCEMENT HANDBOOK for... It's got most of this shit without all the persistent obscene language and 4th grader humor.

The word. My droogies... Is "JURISPRUDENCE".

Look it the fuck up if ya don't know what it means, ya lazy freak. There are about 3 Ba-Jillion totally FREE on-line Dictionaries now.

And Jurisprudence certainly requires 'Perspective' (Look that one up while yer over there also, it's a real fucking shocker, HOHOHO).

And 'Perspective' is REAL tough to attain without shit like...

Ruminative and Comparative critical analysis.

Which usually involves some kinda freaky-deaky methodologies like 'Juxtaposition' or 'A/B style Supplanting'...

Whooooeee!!! Time to get a Merriam-Webster Gold-fucking-Membership!!!! (I'm hoping to have the 'A/B style Supplanting' term added by next week... LMFBO).

And ALL this shit is WILDLY DEPENDANT upon ones ability to ORGANIZE ones work.

So you can ORGANIZE yer THOUGHTS.

So you can make JURISPRUDENTIAL,

INFORMED,

LUCID,

DECISIONS...

BECAUSE THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT seen as DECISIONS ARE USUALLY REFERRED TO AS OMISSIONS and statistically speaking....

OMISSIONS SUCK.

Why?

Because, as often as not, omissions are viewed by folks as shit clearly NOT IN KEEPING WITH THE APPARENT INTENTIONS OF THE MIX AUTHOR AND THEREFORE LOOK A WHOLE FUCKING LOT LIKE MISTAKES to the untrained (HOHOHO) eye.

And you are much better off having your clients get under the mistaken impression that you actually know what the fuck yer doing, rather than having them believe that you are a clueless fukwit. As they are infinitely easier to control and placate, and are MORE LIKELY TO PAY YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS, if you can maneuver them into coming to those erroneous conclusions.

Or, If you ask George

Massenburg(<http://recforums.prosoundweb.com/index.php/m/0/1301/32/0>), You can skip all this pesky tom-foolery and just rent yerself a few hours of playback time in front of a VERY large format analog console, Play ANYTHING for your clients, and they will BUY INTO IT, because... Hey!!! Look at the size of that fucking mixing desk!!! If this guy knows how to run THAT? he MUST know what the fuck he's doing!!!

Because (according to St. George the console slayer) that is the INTENDED PURPOSE and MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION OF THE Large Format Analog Desk.

TO INTIMIDATE THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HOW TO RUN THEM.

AND INFLUENCE THE OPINIONS OF THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE LISTENING TO IT'S PLAYBACK based UPON THE SAME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FEAR AND COERCION.

Yes.

Well...

I think I'm seeing why George moved into software design for a living recently.

Actually.

I think one night at the GML warehouse, George (sans OSHA approved hardhat) was walking underneath these REALLY high shelves which held 'Unboxed' Special Edition GML 9500's made out of solid lead... just then, there was this sudden seismic tremor and...

Well anyways...

In short. When you left the headphone 'click track bleed' in clean audibility on the acoustic guitar. Intro..

It's pretty clear that you didn't INTEND to do this,

AND NOW YOU LOOK LIKE A BUNGLING ASSHOLE,

and NO,

I'm not buying yer story that it "Had a vibe". No really.. It's MUCH BETTER with it in there....

No.

It sucks.

And.

You clearly suck.

You have officially fucked up.

And must/will be killed.

Yes. This is a CLEARCUT case of OMISSION(Well, actually, its kinda INCLUSION... HOHOHO) on the part of the Mix-Author compelling us to say.

Once again.

Dude.

You suck.

Don't try to go Pee-Wee Herman (I meant to do that) on me.

You MISSED that.

You DROPPED the FUCKING BALL.

OMISSION.

And guess what Pismo?

The MORE organized you get.

The LESS likely you are going to be to have to suffer with these horrific little OMISSIONS.

And the MORE likely you are to be able to make INFORMED and PRUDENT DECISIONS, in a TIMELY FASHION, that cleanly reflect your magnificent taste and general omniscience in mix.

And, in the strange cyclopean universe George is swimming around in... the less likely you are to have to rent a very expensive room from Larrabee (George can get you the number, he's over there 24/7), to play yer shit back in, and still have people dig it.

Ahh me.

What were we talking about?

Ohh yes. George Massenburg and the adverse effects of blunt trauma cranial impaction.

Err no.

Uhhmm... We were talking about organization being about 50% of the total battle regarding ALL AE related tasks.

BTW. We ALL know the 2 guys.

The TOTALLY Neat-nick guy who has "A place for everything and everything in it's place" AND STILL CAN'T FIND HIS ASS WITH BOTH HANDS AND A STATE-OF-THE-ART GPS system..

AND.

The crazed wacko who can pull ANYTHING outta a 3 county wide crash site in 22 seconds flat.

Duly noted.

ORGANIZATION AIN'T ALWAYS AN OBVIOUS SYSTEM...

It's all about results.

So... Anyways.

The Kick compressor is AFTER BOTH the EQ AND the gate in this case.

This is because the Kick was gated on input and that skewed the tables in our favor regarding the "Rule of thumb"..

Well. I had so much fun beating the fuck outta George, I never did get anything done here on the fucking Kick. But, I'll be back in just a short bit to get over that little hurdle. I'm currently down at the Jersey Shore (Someplace I have NEVER been in my entire adult life - I shit you not - It's kinda bizarre...) and am heading back to the Gotham hellhole today for more hate and general bedlam.

I'll resume in a bit.

XOXOXOX

SM.

PS. Great.

Looks like ya can't 'cut and paste' from Mac-Word into this shit without it inserting ??? everywhere you had other punctuation marks...

I'll fix this up in a bit... I gotta get on the road or I'm gonna get killed in traffic.

PPS. LMFBO. I took my own advice and decided to visit an online Dictionary.... To say I'm stretching the term "Jurisprudence" is a bit of an understatement... It appears it really does refer much more narrowly to "Law" than I had originally supposed.... Ahh fuck it.... I'll use it for my nefarious purposes until those fools at Merriam-Webster relent and give me my fucking due. HOHO-Gotta-love-the-kings-English-HO.

Here's the picture of the compressor settings. I got some shit to get done and then I'm coming back to this very post to explain how I got to these settings and why. C ya innabit.

SM.



PS. OK. I'm back.

Kinda.

Anyhoo.

This is just a little 'test balloon' compressor for me to scope out how things are working (or not working) in the big picture. I think there's plenty of explanation available for the workings of a compressor (analog or digital) out there on the internet and elsewhere, so I'm gonna dispense with the 'gremlins' metaphors and just say this...

First I'll adjust 'attack' and 'release' 'ratio' and 'threshold' around on this bad boy to "test the waters" regarding the activity of the signal thru the device.... I think of compressors as 'wave shapers'... Kinda like a 'sound design' guy might mentally envision old school analog subtractive synthesis.... A signal comes in with some particular 'trends' in it's basic dynamic nature, and you hammer it thru the wave shaper to 'mold' those trends into new ones more to your liking. This mindset is very helpful for me, as it allows me to focus initially on the various sounds as 'signal sources' with specific characteristics and potential problems. Which, in turn, helps me collate data regarding the basic 'role' the sound plays in the mix, and (hopefully) the solutions for the various tracks. Individually, and as a collection of sounds.

The aforementioned mindset.... and the concept of mixes... ALL MIXES.... having a 'taper' (And we will discuss this concept AT LENGTH in the future) are the 2 best things that came out of my 3-1/2 year association with a handsome, gifted, and utterly ethically bankrupt, young mix AE who came to work for me in the Spring of 1999.

In my boyish awe of his basic mixing prowess, I fed him, gave him a place to live, a slew of work, every single important credential (sans one) he has on his current resume, helped him establish a myriad of biz relationships, and acted as a fervent champion of both him, and his work in that time.

He thanked me for my patronage and mentor-ship by grudgingly showing me these 2 (albeit, incredibly important) concepts and bringing in ONE seriously substantial job in 3.5 years...

And then running off with my wife of 17 years.

To be fair... She kinda managed to run off with 2 OTHER (Non-AE) members of the staff at the same time.

Quite a woman.

It appears my programmed schedule was preempted for the 3 Stooges.

Ahh me.... It WOULD have been a fair exchange in the long run.

But she took the dogs.

My 4 wonderful golden (retriever) girls.

The epicenter of my familial and emotional universe.

On the 15th Sept. It will be 3 years exactly since I have seen them last.

I have spent much of that time imagining them dead to retain (HOHOHO) my sanity.

And why do I tell you all this....?

Well...

Partly because I'm a freak, and in a mad and detached way.... I don't give a fuck about any of this stuff..... as long as I get to keep making records.

Partly because I use the inter-net as 'exorcism', and have become quite comfortable doing so, even if it occasionally fills people with the urge to kick my ass, or to tell me to stop "Wingding on endlessly" (another attempt at an Aussie expression - ChrisV will be by shortly with the 'yay-or-nay'... He's a bit of a "Sticky-Beak" HOHOHO... my favorite Aussie expression EVER!!!)...

Partly because I love telling a good story... and this... In a strange and awkward way... Is as good a story as I've got...

BUT MOSTLY because....

My ex-wife called out of the blue yesterday to inform me that "Mr. Marvelous" has just left her flat, has taken HIS dog, whom she had become tremendously attached to.... and, in this way, she's basically finding out that "what comes around goes around".

The other 2 bozo's have pretty much drifted outta the picture over the years, and they we're 'platonic' husbands anyways.... One the "Home Depot" hubby... The other the "Flea Market" hubby. Both pitiful motherfuckers... who would, but for the grace of God (and the heartbreaking assessment that I can't properly make records in a Maximum Security Prison), be resting comfortably in the Jersey Pine Barrens now.

These droll revelations in a series of phone conversations that ate up a whole fuckload of my time in the last day or so, depressed the shit outta me ('cause I hate to see even a heartless, backstabbing bitch suffer...) and most importantly....

KEPT ME from working on this shit.

With you guys.

My buds.

Who don't need to hear this shit....

Who just wanna talk about...

The Kick drum compressor.

HOHOHO.

BRB. Again....

I gotta get some chow....

I PROMISE....

I'm gonna stay on topic when I get back....

RIIIIGGGHHHHHTTTTTTTTTTTTTT.

The Sound Files:

After a while Slipperman got fed up with typing and took to recording his missives.

These were originally larger files, posted in smaller chunks, but I've joined and re-encoded them to take up less space overall (with the exception of the "DI Guitar Madness" which has been

compressed a bit more, but is at a higher quality so that you can more clearly hear the examples).

More Kick Drum			
Main Lesson	Time	Size	Description
KickDrum.mp3	18 Minutes	4.1mb	EQ, Compression, "beater bouncing," confidence in mixing.

The Snare Drum			
Main Lesson	Time	Size	Description
SnareDrum.mp3	31 Minutes 56 Seconds	7.3mb	Top and bottom micing, clipping, gating, EQ, Compression, "making a song work."
Examples			
10 Bar Snare Loop (342.7K)			
10 Bar Snare Treated Loop (341K)			

Toms			
Main Lesson	Time	Size	Description
Toms.mp3	37 Minutes 30 Seconds	8.5mb	EQ, learning from mistakes.
MoreToms.mp3	30 Minutes	6.8mb	Cigars, planning ahead, "choose your weapons", "the glue," compression, and the big picture.
Examples			
4 Bar Raw Toms Mp3 (216.4K)			



Tom 2 EQ:



Tom 3 EQ:



Tom 3 EQ2:

EQ'd Toms Mp3 (214.2K)

Ride Overheads And Room

Main Lesson	Time	Size	Description
<u>RideOverheadsRoom.mp3</u>	39 Minutes 54 Seconds	9.1mb	Ride Cymbal, L-R Overheads, Room (mono), EQ, "Evil New York Band, and the Satanic Freemason Temple Story."
Examples			
<u>Raw Ride Mp3 (206.4K)</u>			
<u>Ride EQ Mp3 (206.2K)</u>			



Raw Overheads Mp3 (212.2K)

Overheads EQ'd(212K)

Raw Room Mp3 (203.8K)

Room EQ'd Mp3 (203.6K)



Bass Guitar			
Main Lesson	Time	Size	Description
BassGuitar.mp3	38 Minutes 11 Seconds	8.7mb	EQ, History, Upward and downward reinforcement "working EQ bands against one another," Compression, "Horny Cabbies", creative comb filtering.

Examples

[Raw Bass \(Amp\) Rig Mp3 \(813.7K\)](#)



[Bass Rig EQ Mp3 \(809.6K\)](#)



Bass Rig EQ + Compression Mp3 (823.3K)

Bass DI EQ Mp3 (822.8K)



Bass Rig EQ + Compression Mp3 (823.3K)

Raw Bass DI(Sans)Mp3 (826K)

Bass Summed Mp3 (817.7K)

File	Time	Size	Description
<u>StillNoGuitar.mp3</u>	34 Minutes 43 Seconds	7.9mb	Why the guitars aren't available, centering the snare in the overheads and stereo imaging, gain scheduling in software, native logic plugins.
<u>SoundTransduction.mp3</u>	45 Minutes 36 Seconds	10.4mb	State of the business, the history of the business, "why technology put half the drummers out of work," musicianship, the craft, technology abuse, "the message."
<u>Methodologies.mp3</u>	40 Minutes 16 Seconds	9.2mb	Guitar speaker matching, the importance of gain scheduling, the right tools for the job, toms and "the glue," listening to your old work, perspective on the mix and the horrors which often await the mix AE.
<u>DIGuitarMadness.mp3</u>	57 Minutes 23 Seconds	27.7mb	Slipperman and friends as he run a JCM800 MKII and a Mesa Boogie MKIV through their paces directly with a Palmer box. Hilarity ensues.
<u>TheStudio.mp3</u>	40 Minutes 56 Seconds	9.4mb	Slipperman discusses his identity, his studio, and the reality of being an AE.